JERRY SPRINGER'S SENATE RACE
MICHELLE COTTLE

ROMAN POLANSKI'S HOLOCAUST MISTAKE
MICHAEL B. OREN

THE NEW REPUBLIC
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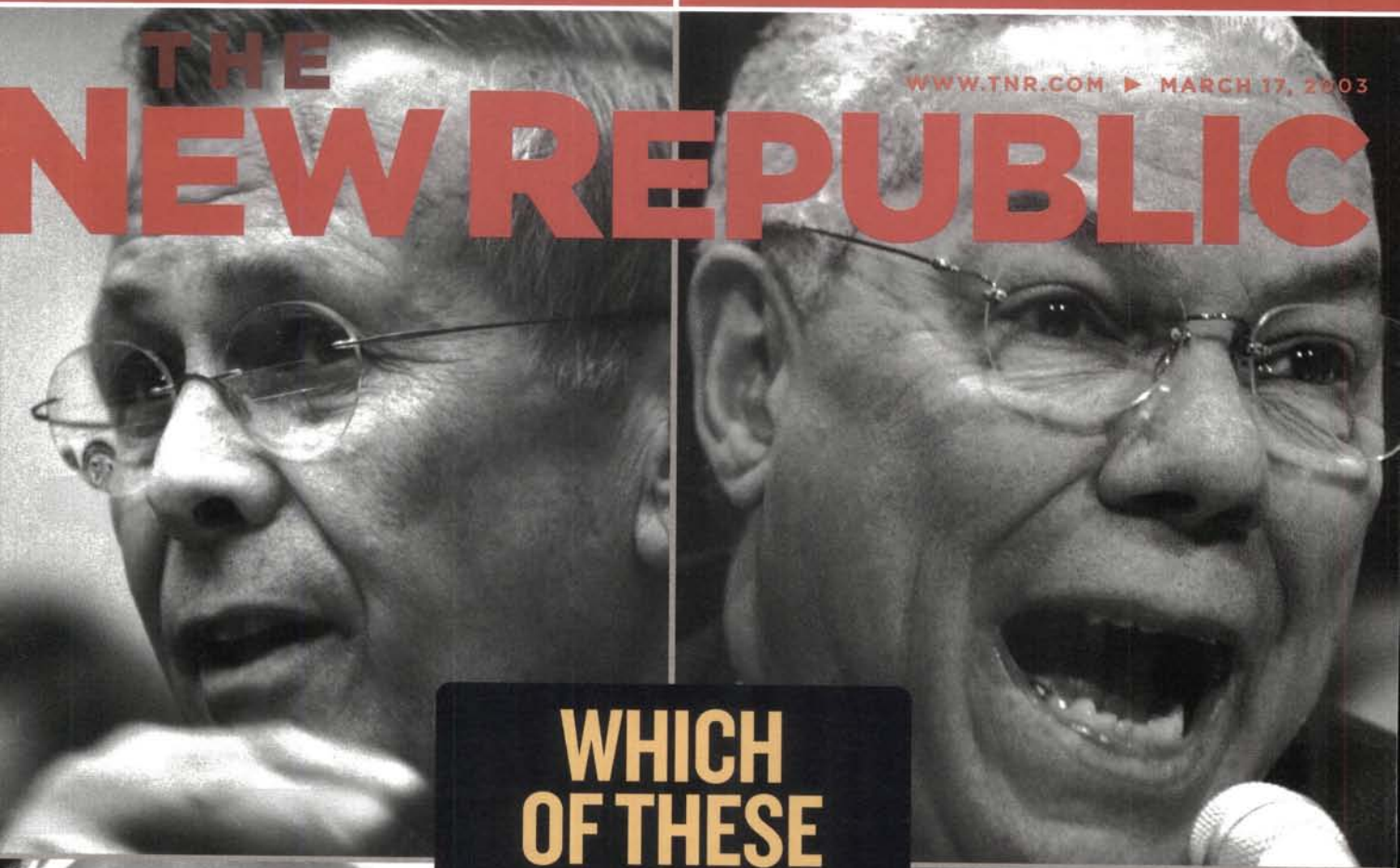
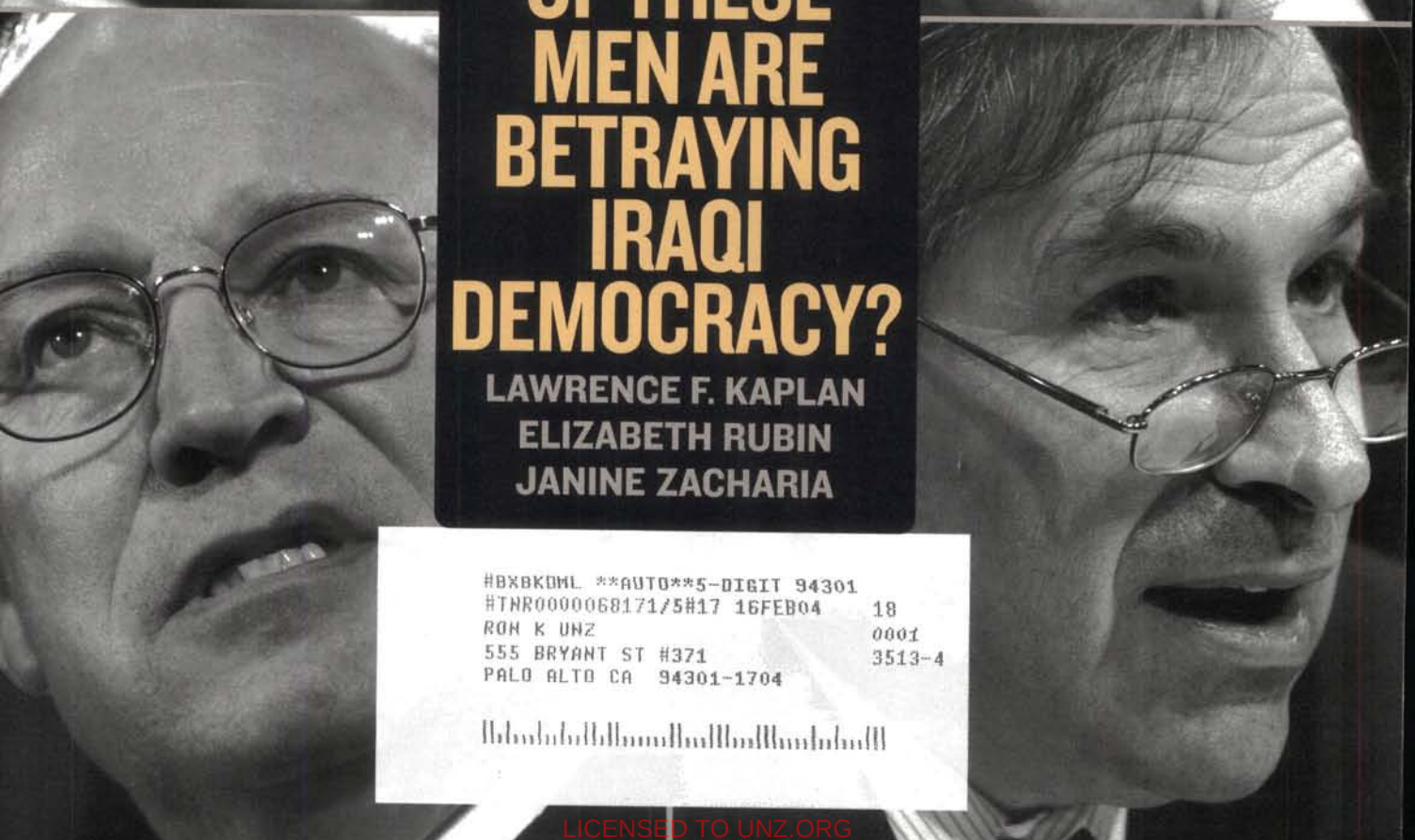


WHICH OF THESE MEN ARE BETRAYING IRAQI DEMOCRACY?

LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN
ELIZABETH RUBIN
JANINE ZACHARIA



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Where We Stand

THE **AFT** ON CRITICAL ISSUES

ONE SIZE CAN'T FIT ALL

High-quality vocational education should be an option for more students who need and want it.

Step inside New York City's Aviation High School and you know right away, this is an extraordinary educational institution. But it isn't just the aerospace artifacts and airplane hangar that get your attention. The classrooms and hallways buzz with high-altitude talk about "vectors," and the physics and mechanics of flight. This is vocational education the way it should be.

Students spend three hours a day in specialized aviation maintenance and technology classes with lots of hands-on learning. The rest of the day, they take traditional courses. Seventy to eighty percent of the students at Aviation High take, and pass, New York's tough state Regents exams; and those who complete the five-year program are automatically FAA-certified.

When it comes to education, one size doesn't fit all. Young people don't all share the same goals and ambitions. The truth is, some students are simply not cut out for a traditional curriculum. By the time they reach high school, what many want, and need, are high-quality vocational classes. But too often vocational education means second-rate courses that do little to prepare students for real jobs. And they don't provide the math, science and higher-level thinking skills needed in today's workplaces.

The good news is that Aviation High School isn't alone. A number of other outstanding programs provide challenging academics and excellent vocational courses. (One is the National Academy of Finance, a program in 275 schools, which introduces students to career opportunities in the financial services industry.) But there aren't enough of them, and many have to struggle for funding to maintain high standards.

We need to recognize and respect students' individual differences. Instead of forcing round pegs into square holes, let's make sure the choice of a high-quality vocational education is available for all young people whose futures depend on it.

FACTS:

- *The main federal funding mechanism for vocational education is the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. Passed in 1998, the act will expire in September unless Congress reauthorizes it.*
- *In 1980, vocational education funding was about six percent of the total U.S. Department of Education budget; today it is less than three percent.*
- *President Bush's 2004 budget request would cut federal funding for vocational education by $300 million.*

aft AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS AFL • CIO

Sandra Feldman

Sandra Feldman, President, American Federation of Teachers

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A JOURNAL OF POLITICS AND THE ARTS

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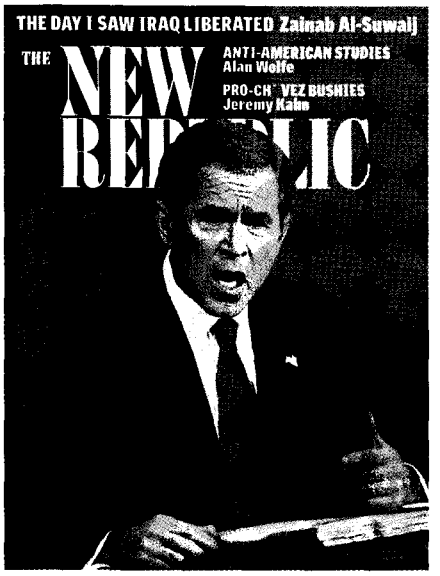
CORRESPONDENCE



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

UNLIKE PETER BEINART, I SEE NO contradiction between Senator John Kerry's supportive vote to give President Bush authority to wage war against Iraq and his statements that the president must not act unilaterally ("No Vote," February 10). The vote was to encourage the president to work with the United Nations, but it required him to do nothing more than alert Congress before initiating hostilities or within 48 hours thereof and report to Congress every 60 days after that. We constantly authorize our leaders to take actions on our behalf, but we properly expect that they consult with others and act responsibly. For Bush to act unilaterally would indeed be, to quote Kerry, "one of the great catastrophes and mistakes of our time."

ROBERT E. FIELD
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

DUE CAUTION

THE NEW REPUBLIC EDITORIAL argues that we must go to war with Iraq unless they disarm ("Time Out," February 10). The editors claim that the moderate antiwar position is "abject pacifism." Apparently "abject pacifism" now replaces "soft on communism" as an epithet to be hurled at someone who disagrees with conservatives. Such name-calling is a sign of weakness in this argument. It has long been a policy of the United States not to go to war unless we are attacked or there is an imminent threat to the country. The war fever that is currently gripping the Bush administration—and TNR—shows why that is a wise policy. Following TNR's logic, we could confront any country whose leader we considered "evil" and demand that he disarm or we will attack. Once we remove the need to prove an imminent threat exists, we can make a case for preemptive attacks against countries all over the world. Other countries can make the same argument. Consider India and Pakistan. It is hardly abject pacifism to demand that our government adhere to its traditional no-first-strike policy and prove that an imminent threat exists before starting a war that may lead to thousands or tens of thousands of deaths. This is reasoned caution, not abject pacifism.

LAWRENCE D. STONE
Oakton, Virginia

OVERDOSE

THE ARGUMENT THAT PUBLIC SKEPTICISM about the Ritalin/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) explosion is somehow a parochial "conservative" thing is flatly wrong ("Trick Question," by Michael Fumento, February 3). Dissent from yesterday's enthusiasm for the drug is in fact widespread—and growing. "Many parents," in the words of a recent report in the *National Journal*, "have joined the backlash against Ritalin, and now reject expert advice to use it and related drugs." Many others are part of the well-publicized commercial rush toward non-stimulant alternatives such as Strattera. Doctors, too, are having second thoughts, led by reform-minded physicians such as Thomas Armstrong (*The Myth of the ADD Child*, 1995) and Lawrence H. Diller (*Running on Ritalin*, 1998). Across the ideological board, there is growing concern that "[t]oday, fidgety kids are labeled ADD [Attention Deficit Disorder] and dosed with Ritalin until they can sit still in math class," as TNR senior editor Michelle Cottle has written in *The Washington Monthly*, and many others, left and right, agree.

Skepticism is also entrenched in another place somewhat lacking in right-wing yes-men, namely the black community, including the 20,000 black doctors of the National Medical Association and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, both of which have publicly questioned the stimulant explosion. The skeptics know what defenders of the status quo ignore: that prescribing stimulants to millions of children is creating more problems than it solves. One such problem is abuse. Like it or not, the chemical similarities between Ritalin/methylphenidate and cocaine are well-established in the medical literature (see, for example, "Pay Attention: Ritalin Acts Much Like Cocaine," *Journal of the American Medical Association*, August 22/29, 2001). They are also well-established on the street. Every college campus in the country is home to a bustling black market in Ritalin pills, and everybody knows it except for over-40, see-no-evil parents and doctors. Why is there is an upswing in emergency room visits involving Ritalin abuse (271 in 1990 versus 1,727 in 1998)? Why does Ritalin have street names (Rids, Pineapple, Uppers, Vitamin R, Jif, R-Ball)? Why does the drug rank on the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) top-ten list of the country's most-stolen pharmaceuticals? Is there any connection whatever between the staggering number of minors now prescribed methylphenidate and the well-documented rise in its abuse? At the risk of belaboring things: duh.

Abuse is only one of the problems attendant on the pathologizing of so many children (for a detailed discussion, see my "Why Ritalin Rules," *Policy Review*, April & May 1999). Yes, hard cases do exist, and some parents do swear by stimulant drugs. No one doubts it. But hard cases alone can-

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not possibly account for the millions of prescriptions now circulating. In January, the *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine* estimated that more than *6 percent* of the child population now takes one or another psychiatric medication. Do defenders of the status quo truly believe that so many children, from toddlers on up, are in so parlous a state as to require chronic psychotropic medication?

MARY EBERSTADT
Washington, D.C.

MICHAEL FUMENTO REPLIES:

In her *Policy Review* article Eberstadt wrote that child prescriptions for ADHD drugs have soared, while her present letter decries "the staggering number of minors now prescribed" Ritalin. Yet she contradicts this by claiming, "Dissent from yesterday's enthusiasm for the drug is in fact widespread—and growing." As it happens, there is statistical support for the rapid rise in prescriptions; there is nothing to back her claim of dissent.

For institutional support she cites a small legislative group and a tiny (20,000-member) medical group. Are these supposed to cancel out the positions of the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, among other esteemed medical associations?

The alleged "rush" to Strattera is a fabrication. Drug companies report sales on a quarterly basis; Strattera only became available in mid-January.

Eberstadt misrepresents Diller's views. He does have serious reservations about possible Ritalin overuse, which he admits puts him clearly in the minority among physicians. He also just finished a paper declaring that he has prescribed the drug for more than 25 years because his "role as a doctor is to ease suffering and Ritalin will make things easier for the child."

Counting nicknames seems a curious way to measure drug abuse, but Eberstadt's "top-ten" assertion is another fabrication. According to DEA spokeswoman Rogene Waite, "We have no such list." The DEA's "Drug Trafficking" page does list ten problem narcotics, but methylphenidate is not among them.

As my article stated, "According to the DEA, [cocaine and methylphenidate] are comparable when 'administered the same way at comparable doses.' But ADHD stimulants, when taken as prescribed, are neither administered in the same way as cocaine nor at comparable doses." Ritalin actually works *against* drug abuse. The January 2003 issue of *Pediatrics* reported that, "stimulant therapy in childhood is associated with a [50 percent] reduction in the risk for subsequent drug and alcohol use disorders."

Eberstadt's emergency room visit claim merely shows high percentage growth from a low baseline. By comparison, the Department of Health and Human Services lists 36 different drugs in order of emergency room visits, emergency room mentions, etc. Methylphenidate isn't mentioned.

When Eberstadt finally cites usage data, it's not for ADHD drugs but for all psychotropic medicines. Sticking to the topic, the February 2003 issue of *Pediatrics* found an average 4.3 percent use of stimulants among insured children ages five to 14, which inflates the numbers because the uninsured get fewer drugs. Stimulant use increased with age to a point, then it started receding. This is hardly the Fourth Horseman of the Apocalypse but rather an indication that children who need medication to counter a crippling mental disorder are getting it. ■

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Apocalypse Now

TRB FROM WASHINGTON

On the subject of North Korea, there are two groups of people in Washington today: People who are terrified, and people who aren't paying attention. Unfortunately, the latter category seems to include the president of the United States.

In recent days, Pyongyang has begun an escalating series of military provocations. On February 20, a North Korean fighter jet crossed into South Korean airspace, leading Seoul to scramble its own jets and put a missile battery on high alert. On February 24, North Korea greeted the inauguration of South Korea's new president by launching an anti-ship missile into the Sea of Japan. And, on March 1, North Korean MiGs trailed a U.S. spy plane for 22 minutes, the first such incident since 1969. "If an encounter like this happens again," a former North Korean general told *The Washington Post,* "I think they will shoot down the U.S. plane. North Koreans don't have any fear of war."

But all this pales before the provocation looming in the distance: Pyongyang's reopening of the Yongbyon nuclear reprocessing plant. U.S. spy satellites show feverish activity around the long-dormant site, and Bush administration officials say they expect it will be reopened within weeks. "Once they start reprocessing," an American official recently told *The New York Times'* David Sanger, "it's a [nuclear] bomb a month from now until summer." Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage told Congress in February that North Korea might well sell that nuclear material to "a non-state actor or a rogue state."

Not long ago, administration officials were telling journalists that the reopening of Yongbyon was a "red line." More recently, as Pyongyang has gotten closer to crossing it, the Bush team has taken a more accommodating line—suggesting that the plant's reactivation will jolt North Korea's neighbors into finally applying serious diplomatic pressure on Pyongyang. But that's probably a pipe dream. Once North Korea starts turning spent fuel rods into plutonium, its willingness to negotiate away Yongbyon will dramatically diminish. And, if it becomes clear that diplomatic overtures are worthless, the Bush administration will feel enormous pressure to do *something* to prevent Pyongyang from producing bombs that could end up in Al Qaeda's hands.

Already, hawks inside and outside the Bush administration are tiptoeing in the direction of a preemptive strike. In the March issue of *Commentary*, Joshua Muravchik writes, "Not only does the North's belligerence leave us no choice but to 'think' about war, we cannot exclude the possibility of initiating military action ourselves." Defense Policy Review Board Chairman Richard Perle recently said the Bush administration needed to consider ways to "neutralize" North Korea's massive military firepower. As the *Nelson Report*, an influential Washington newsletter on Asian policy, put it last week, "The dirty little secret . . . is that some Bush hard-liners not only are willing to risk war, they think that if the U.S. pushes hard enough, N. Korea will prove to be a paper tiger and swiftly collapse." When Pyongyang begins building nukes and the U.S. military is done toppling Saddam, that dirty little secret will become a full-blown policy option.

Given these circumstances, you'd think the president and his top advisers would be frantic. Instead, they're eerily sanguine. For weeks now, Bush officials have been denying that North Korea's behavior constitutes a "crisis." Secretary of State Colin Powell called Pyongyang's missile test "fairly innocuous" and "not surprising." One Bush official told Sanger that "nothing is happening—and no one knows how we will respond when the bomb-making starts."

The administration would like observers to interpret its calm as steely resolve. But it actually signifies a refusal to face reality. The Bush administration says it wants multilateral talks with Pyongyang and a series of other countries, including South Korea, Russia, China, and Japan. The theory behind this approach is that only a united front among North Korea's neighbors can exert the pressure necessary to convince Kim Jong Il to turn back. But the diplomatic reality is that there is no united front. North Korea adamantly rejects multilateral talks, and South Korea, Russia, and China adamantly refuse to turn the screws. The Bush administration is paying the price for having helped fuel the anti-Americanism that elected an ultra-soft-line president in Seoul last December. And it cannot pull out all the diplomatic stops with Moscow and Beijing since its highest priority is convincing those governments not to veto an Iraq resolution at the Security Council. The unhappy result is that the United States is basically facing this crisis alone.

Recognizing this diplomatic reality means accepting unconditional, one-on-one talks with Pyongyang. There's a modest chance such negotiations could defer the reopening of Yongbyon. (One China insider speculated to Chris Nelson recently that, if the United States made progress in such negotiations, Beijing might use its leverage with Pyongyang to help secure a deal.) But, whether or not such talks avert an international crisis, they would create a domestic political one. For conservatives—who have called Bill Clinton an appeaser and a dupe for his 1994 deal with Kim Jong Il—unconditional, bilateral talks by the Bush administration would constitute something close to a betrayal. Indeed, when senior Bushies seemed to contemplate them last fall, they were roundly denounced on the right. And now the president has reportedly prohibited top officials from even raising the possibility.

The administration may be waiting to begin bilateral talks until after an Iraq war, when presumably it will be in a position of overwhelming domestic political strength. But, by that time, Yongbyon may well be up and running (many experts think North Korea will deliberately start the reactor while the United States is at war), and thus it will probably be too late. Today, when it really matters, the Bush administration effectively has no policy at all.

If the Bush administration does understand that it will eventually have to sit down with Pyongyang, then its current delay represents the inexcusable privileging of politics over national security. If, on the other hand, it has no intention of engaging in such talks, its current stalling tactics may stem from a very different calculation: That the United States can only fight one war at a time. As Stanley Kurtz put it approvingly recently in *National Review Online*, "If our policy is to strike when we may and must, silence makes a good deal of sense."

This has so far been too chilling an interpretation for most observers. But, in either case, the United States is much closer to the brink than most Americans realize. And, whether out of political self-interest or ideological zeal, the Bush administration doesn't seem to mind.

PETER BEINART

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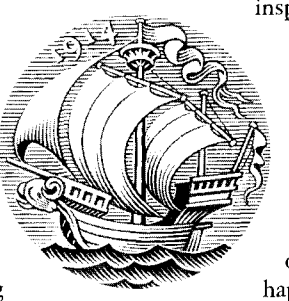
Waiting Game

THE DEBATE OVER war with Iraq centers on means rather than ends. Unlike Vietnam, where opponents questioned whether the goal of repelling Hanoi's aggression was worth the price in blood, nearly all war critics today concede the necessity of the goal at hand—disarming Iraq. Yet they insist it can be achieved at a lower cost, either by forcing Saddam Hussein to relinquish his weapons peacefully or by obtaining U.N. approval before invading. Those who oppose war are not mistaken to think that either outcome would be preferable to fighting without the imprimatur of the Security Council. Where they go wrong is in believing that those outcomes remain possible. The case for waiting—a case that still appeals to a depressingly large number of liberals—thus rests upon a delusion.

Consider voluntary disarmament. The best way to get Saddam to relinquish his weapons was for the United Nations to draw a line in the sand, in the form of Resolution 1441, and back it up with the threat of force. Alas, the Iraqi dictator has stomped over that line. He failed, weapons inspectors say, to submit a full accounting of proscribed weapons, as he was required to do under 1441. His scientists—no doubt threatened by his secret police—have refused to be interviewed outside the country or have insisted upon tape-recording their interviews. Hans Blix has been reduced to praising Iraq for partial compliance.

War opponents describe this state of affairs as "progress." In fact, it's just the opposite. When crafting Resolution 1441 last November, Russia and France worried that the United States would declare war over some ultra-technical violation. Today, Iraq is allowed to engage without sanction in substantive violations that not even France countenanced three months ago. Resolution 1441 is effectively a dead letter—a development that has only fed Saddam's confidence. As *The Washington Post* reported last month, "Saddam Hussein's government, apparently emboldened by anti-war sentiment at the U.N. Security Council and in worldwide street protests, has not followed through on its promises of increased cooperation with U.N. arms inspectors." This further degradation of the U.N.'s credibility has erased any slim possibility that the mere threat of force might compel Iraq to disarm.

Some war opponents have therefore retreated to a fallback argument: Even if Iraq never disarms completely, at least the presence of inspectors will keep it from expanding its arsenal. "What can [Saddam] get away with?" Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean asked recently, "as long as Iraq is inspected, under constant surveillance, surrounded, grounded because of no-fly zones?" But this assertion rests upon an ignorance of history. In the 1990s, while UNSCOM, considered by many weapons experts to be more aggressive than the current inspections regime, prowled Iraq, inspectors and American intelligence were convinced the Iraqi nuclear program had been eradicated. Only a series of high-profile defections—a lucky break unlikely to recur—revealed that Saddam had been working toward a bomb under their noses. And, even if today's inspections are working, history suggests that the minute the threat of force recedes, Saddam will end even his current minimal compliance. Many liberals complain that war will end the inspections, but, if we reach the summer, when war is deemed impossible, it is a sure bet that Saddam will end them himself.



Just as naive is the hope that further delay will convince the Security Council to authorize force. Many Democrats have presented the dearth of international support as essentially a conscious choice by President Bush. As Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle said this week, "The only way to do this and do it right is through the auspices of the U.N. and an international coalition. I think in both cases this administration has fallen short." Yet the Bush administration has demonstrated more interest in the Security Council than the Security Council has demonstrated in Iraqi disarmament. For a dozen years, France and Russia fought to weaken inspections and resisted even modest punishments of Iraq. The last few months have followed the same pattern. When Iraq withholds full cooperation from inspectors, Paris and Moscow are unmoved because this violation falls short of a "smoking gun." When a breakthrough does occur, such as the discovery of the Al-Samoud missiles, they see it as evidence that inspections are working.

It's now clear that the Security Council endorsed Resolution 1441 only as a gambit to avoid war. French President Jacques Chirac revealed perhaps more than he intended last week when he blurted out that "disarmament must happen peacefully." This gives the game away. Disarmament could only come about either through war or the threat of war. If disarmament *must* be peaceful, then there will be no disarmament. And, when Democrats insist that war *must* have U.N. approval, they are attaching themselves to the French position. It may seem they are arguing for a certain means, but in fact they are arguing for an end. ■

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NOTEBOOK

WILL REVERSES . . . SHIELDS RETREAT . . . NADERITES REGROUP

THE SITUATIONALIST

THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF SENATE Republicans who, after years of blocking President Clinton's judicial nominees, are now clamoring for President Bush's judicial nominees to be given speedy hearings and put on the bench. But who expects intellectual consistency from hack politicians like Trent Lott and Orrin Hatch? Expecting such consistency from intellectual columnists, however, is another matter—and George Will, as the blogger Atrios (*atrios.blogspot.com*) has noted, isn't living up to expectations.

In 1993, when Clinton was in the White House and Senate Republicans were threatening to thwart his agenda through the use of the filibuster, liberal lawyer Lloyd Cutler criticized the Senate rule that requires 60 votes to end debate and mandate a vote as unconstitutional. Cutler contended that the Constitution "plainly implies" that, except in five specific instances where the text calls for a two-thirds vote, each house of Congress must make all of its decisions by majority vote and that the 60-vote supermajority to end a filibuster, therefore, was unconstitutional. At the time, Will would have none of it, blasting Cutler for succumbing to "the temptations of institutional tinkering" and deliberately misreading the Constitution. While agreeing that "other than in the five cases, a simple majority vote shall decide the disposition by each house of business that has consequences beyond each house," Will argued that "procedural rules internal to each house are another matter" and thus the Senate could require a supermajority to end a filibuster without running afoul of the Constitution.

Fast-forward to the present day: With Bush in the White House and Senate Democrats filibustering a vote on the circuit-court confirmation of Miguel Estrada, Will suddenly sounds an awful lot like, well, Cutler. "If at least 41 Senate Democrats succeed in blocking a vote on . . . Estrada, . . . the Constitution effectively will be amended," Will wrote last week. "If Senate rules, exploited by an anti-constitutional minority, are allowed to trump the Constitution's text and two centuries of practice, the Senate's power to consent to judicial nominations will have become a Senate right to require a 60-vote supermajority for confirmations." So much for procedural justice.

George Will

THINGS FALL APART

"DEMOCRATS PULLING TOGETHER UNITED FRONT AGAINST GOP"

— New York Times *headline, March 3*

"DEMOCRATS ON HILL SPLIT ON AGENDA; DIVISIONS WEAKEN ATTACKS ON BUSH"

— Washington Post *headline, the next day*

DESERT SHIELD

KEN O'KEEFE—GULF WAR VET, self-declared "citizen of the world," and, most recently, one of more than 200 human shields in Iraq—is coming home. Several weeks ago, O'Keefe set off from London with a motley, multinational crew intent on using their bodies to defend hospitals, schools, and other elements of Iraq's civilian infrastructure from a U.S. attack. But, last week, after enticing hundreds of shields with offers of free housing, Internet access, and the freedom to shield whatever they pleased, the Iraqi government reversed itself, ordering them to disperse to a list of Saddam-approved sites—including power plants and oil refineries—or leave. Those who went along with the ultimatum found themselves in front of sites that, while not exactly military in nature, were conveniently located next to ammo dumps, troop camps, and gun emplacements. Dismayed by their host's sudden about-face, many shields began packing. As he was preparing to depart, O'Keefe told London's *Daily Telegraph* that "we had been told we would go to humanitarian sites, specifically hospitals. . . . But we've now been told that we can't go to those places. The human-shields strategy will not work under these circumstances. The level of trust is not present now." We wish O'Keefe well in regaining his lost idealism.

HOPE SPRINGS ETERNAL

"U.S. SEES MOUNTING SUPPORT FOR RESOLUTION; RUSSIA SUGGESTS IT WOULD USE VETO"

— Washington Times *headline, March 5*

THE PRODIGAL SPOILER

WE WERE SURPRISED TO LEARN from Iowa Democrats that supporters of Ralph Nader recently contacted the state party to learn how Nader could compete in next January's Democratic caucuses. Could the man who threw the election to Bush really be thinking about running as a Democrat? It turns out the effort to draft Nader is apparently being managed by freelancers, not the ex–Green Party presidential candidate himself. Brian Crawford, who is chairing the draft effort, told the Associated Press, "There are voters who demand a real alternative to President Bush's America." Yes,

DAVID COWLES

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and in 2000 they were known as "Gore voters." We suggest that, if Nader chooses to run in 2004, he adopt the slogan "Four more years!"

GLORY

WE ARE VERY PROUD TO ANNOUNCE that the George Polk Award for Magazine Reporting in 2002 has been awarded to Arnold S. Relman and Marcia Angell for their essay "America's Other Drug Problem," which appeared in TNR on December 16, 2002. We will rely upon the wisdom of the judges to explain why this learned and sharp and comprehensive analysis of the impact of the pharmaceutical companies on American health care has had such a wide readership in government agencies and medical schools, among the makers of policy and the students of policy: "Thanks to a most timely and informed rebuttal in THE NEW REPUBLIC, co-authored by two distinguished leaders of the medical sciences, policy makers can at last draw sharply different and more plausible conclusions. Only a very small part of major drug company budgets, they reveal, are actually dedicated to research and development of new products, indeed much less than what is spent on marketing and advertising. Most research leading to important new prescription drugs, they say, is developed not in drug company labs but rather in those of nonprofit-academic and government research centers—and most of it is paid for, not by drug companies but by government with our taxpayer dollars. Why then the soaring cost of prescription drugs? Look no further, they say, than the sixty million dollar annual budget of the pharmaceutical industry's principal trade association, and the many millions more spent by individual companies, for massive and highly successful lobbying and public relations programs. For their masterful and sorely-needed study of the anatomy of a major health care crisis, Arnold S. Relman and Marcia Angell have won the George Polk Award for Magazine Reporting." Amen.

MORE GLORY

WE ARE DELIGHTED TO RECORD that the National Book Critics Circle Award for nonfiction has been awarded to Samantha Power for *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide,* which was published to extraordinary acclaim by New Republic Books (Basic Books) last year. Readers of these pages will be familiar with the quality of Power's analysis of the failures of U.S. foreign policy during the last decade, with her remarkable combination of lucidity and outrage. It is a gratifying thing, the spectacle of just deserts; and, if this prize puts this book into the hands of more people in the business of foreign policy, the world may even become a somewhat less bad place. ■

Inside the Box | Bruce Reed

FACE-OFF Saddam offers to debate Bush. White House response: "Fine, but can it wait until after you get the Democratic nomination?"

OLD SCORES Bush 41 defends 1991 decision to leave Saddam in power: "If I'd solved the problem, we'd never have had the chance to blame it on Clinton."

PEST CONTROL Turkey's parliament rejects troop deal by three votes. White House reaction: "How do you say 'Tom DeLay' in Turkish?"

MANY HAPPY RETURNS Bush campaign doubles entry price for fund-raising Pioneers to $200,000: "Who says we don't believe in targeted tax cuts?"

SURVIVOR Consumer confidence hits nine-year low. What Americans think: "We like watching reality shows, not living them."

ROBIN HOOD Ways and Means Committee raises taxes on imported bows and arrows: "If people aren't going to buy American, the least they can do is buy guns."

STIMULUS PACKAGE Nevada considers prostitution tax to balance state budget. Treasury Secretary Snow: "It's a good thing our new savings accounts allow tax-free withdrawals for any purpose."

PASSING THE BUCK White House lectures Republicans in Congress for underfunding homeland security: "Our job is to tell you what to do. Your job is to take the fall for doing it."

SADDAM: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE; ROBIN HOOD: ZUMA PRESS

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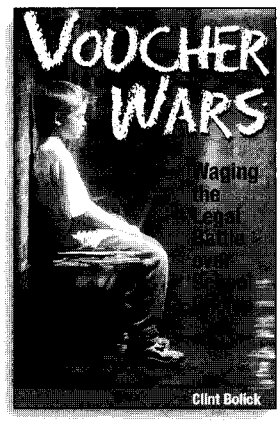

Voucher Wars: Waging the Legal Battle over School Choice

by Clint Bolick

Set against the backdrop of a public school system that consigns millions of disadvantaged children to educational inequality, the Cleveland school vouchers case, successfully appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, has brought the issue of educational freedom to national attention. Some have called it the most important lawsuit of its kind since *Brown v. Board of Education*. In this book, Clint Bolick, one of the premier fighters for school choice in the nation and counsel in the Cleveland case, recounts the drama and tactics of the 12-year battle for choice and distills crucial lessons for future educational freedom battles. 277 pp./ $20.00 cloth ISBN 1-930865-37-6/ **$12.00 paper** ISBN 1-930865-38-4

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How Paris armed Saddam. French Twist

BY KENNETH R. TIMMERMAN

In recent weeks, the normally somnolent United Nations has become the scene of furious bargaining and arm-twisting over a potential second resolution authorizing the use of force to disarm Iraq. And, as followers of the United Nations know, while Washington has tried to line up support for the resolution, primary opposition has come from France. French officials have vowed that Paris is committed to disarming Iraq, though France prefers to continue with weapons inspectors rather than to utilize force. "Together and in peace, we must keep strong pressure on [Iraq] to attain the objective we have set: the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq," French President Jacques Chirac said this week. Yet, while Paris claims it wants to disarm Iraq, France actually has continued arming Saddam Hussein's regime—right up to the present day. France is responsible for nearly 25 percent of Iraq's imports, trade worth nearly $1.5 billion to French companies. The antiwar movement makes considerable hay of America's support for Saddam during the 1980s. What they overlook is that France has been providing equipment with military uses to Baghdad for years.

It's no secret that France has significant oil interests in Iraq. According to Richard Perle, who heads the Pentagon's unofficial Advisory Defense Policy Board, the French national oil giant TotalFinaElf recently negotiated a contract with Baghdad to expand Iraq's huge southern oil fields worth an estimated $40 to $60 billion. That contract can only come to fruition if Saddam remains in power. "One can suspect that there is something there; that in between the real value of that contract and the cash value of that contract there is a certain amount of political support," Perle says. "[I]t's entirely possible that Saddam negotiated that deal because he thought that along with the revenues ... he'd get something else."

TotalFinaElf has not publicly announced the deal mentioned by Perle, yet a former Iraqi trade official who recently defected told me that Baghdad was seeking "to reward France through lucrative oil contracts" for its political support. He also pointed out that Iraqi intermediaries regularly arranged payment from French oil companies under the U.N.'s oil-for-food program and that these oil firms send some of the cash to Saddam's inner circle. "Ten percent of contract value is regularly kicked back to Saddam Hussein and his sons, Uday and Qusay, for use in purchasing equipment for their illicit weapons programs," he said.

Kenneth R. Timmerman is a senior writer for Insight *magazine and author of* The Death Lobby: How the West Armed Iraq.

Worse than the oil deals, Iraq turns to France for telecommunications products, pesticides, and other items ostensibly imported to rebuild Iraq's civilian infrastructure but which could be used for Iraqi weapons programs. Since 1997, the U.N. Office of the Iraq Programme (OIP) has catalogued Iraq's foreign contracts in a database that shows a wealth of French deals.

For instance, a review of export-license applications catalogued by the OIP reveals that, over the past four years, French telecommunications giant Alcatel has signed contracts worth more than $65 million to upgrade Iraq's fiber-optic infrastructure, which American intelligence complains helps Baghdad evade electronic eavesdropping. During the Gulf war, most of Saddam's military communications were carried over microwave relays, or more simply by radio, and were easily tapped by American intelligence from afar. But fiber-optic landlines must be physically tapped into by agents on the ground, putting these agents at serious risk. Fiber optics, accordingly, would provide the Iraqi regime with better security over its operational planning, allowing Saddam to more easily relay his orders to commanders in the field in the event of war.

Over the same time period, many other French companies have made the pilgrimage to Baghdad. French firms have supplied specialized pumps and other equipment that could potentially be used for Iraq's centrifuge uranium-enrichment programs. Indeed, an October 2001 intelligence analysis by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory indicated that Iraq was importing large quantities of equipment from France and elsewhere that was specially coated to allow it to be used with highly corrosive uranium hexafluoride gas, which is used in uranium enrichment.

Meanwhile, French automakers Renault and Peugeot have signed deals to supply Iraq with trucks, including tractor-trailers, that can be modified and used to launch Scud missiles. The medical company Karl Storz Endoscopie France S.A. has inked a contract to sell Iraq lithotripsy machines, which can be used for treating kidney stones. But these machines also employ a high-speed krytron switch similar to those used to trigger nuclear warheads, and, according to published reports, Baghdad sought to import an additional 120 "spare" krytrons that might then be utilized in military programs. Indeed, former Iraq officials say that an Iraqi intermediary named Faiz Nahab, who now lives in Britain, has repeatedly sought to import banned equipment for Iraq's weapons programs under the guise of medical devices.

Given the potential dual use of items like the lithotripsy machines, the United States, using its power over sanctions on Iraq, has placed a hold on the Karl Storz deal. That deal, unfortunately, is hardly unique. A recent $40 million contract with the French subsidiary of the German company Siemens to supply unspecified "engineering services" to Iraq was put on hold by the American mission at the United Nations because of its potential to feed directly into Iraq's proscribed weapons programs. In fact, Washington has placed holds on 93 French contracts because of their potential to be utilized

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in producing weapons of mass destruction. Many times, including in the case of Karl Storz, the French government has simply turned around and resubmitted similar contracts to the United Nations, which have gone through.

In private, French officials vigorously deny that commercial motives are driving their alliance with Germany against using force to disarm Iraq. Yet, even as the drums of war beat louder and the world focuses on Saddam's weapons of mass destruction, French firms have continued their potentially dangerous trade with Baghdad. According to OIP information, in 2002 French agricultural-equipment suppliers Dow AgroSciences and Levant Overseas Development Ltd. signed deals providing Iraq with pesticides, a catchall category of chemicals that American officials and nonproliferation experts point out includes chemicals that are direct precursors of chemical weapons.

If Iraq's past behavior is any guide, even more dangerous contracts signed in secret may come out in the wake of a conflict with the United States. Which is one more reason Paris would prefer Saddam remain in power. ■

Is Medicare Bush's Waterloo?

Old Tricks

BY JONATHAN COHN

Given the White House's reputation for political savvy and tight spin control, its very public stumbling over Medicare has been fascinating to watch. It began back on January 10, when the administration circulated a memo on Capitol Hill outlining President Bush's Medicare reform plan, including the requirement that seniors leave the traditional fee-for-service program and enroll in HMOs if they wanted to obtain prescription-drug coverage. This didn't sit well with congressional leaders, in part because they felt they hadn't been sufficiently consulted beforehand (Ways and Means Chairman Bill Thomas was said to be particularly piqued) and in part because the HMO requirement was sure to offend seniors. So, a few days later, those briefings found their way into the hands of Robert Pear of *The New York Times* and Amy Goldstein of *The Washington Post*, prompting even Republican allies to trash the plan publicly: "Prescription-drug coverage should be available to all seniors, not just those who switch into managed care," said Charles Grassley, whose Senate Finance Committee has jurisdiction over the bill. A spokesperson for Senator Olympia Snowe, who also sits on the Finance Committee, said the senator "clearly would have concerns about an approach that required entry into managed care in order to receive prescription drugs."

Soon the White House was in full retreat. For weeks, administration officials had been promising an aggressive push on Medicare reform, beginning with a major policy speech in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on the morning following the State of the Union address. But, with so many would-be allies in a tizzy, the White House scrapped the plan at the last minute. In Grand Rapids, standing before a backdrop emblazoned with the words STRENGTHENING MEDICARE, Bush rushed through a few throwaway lines about protecting seniors and then moved quickly onto Iraq.

Early February produced two new spectacles: Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy Thompson stammered through an appearance before the House Ways and Means Committee, deflecting questions from angry representatives with repeated variations of "the proposal is still being worked on." Then came a story in the *Chicago Tribune*, quoting House Speaker Dennis Hastert about a testy meeting he'd had with Bush at the White House. "I don't think you can pass a piece of legislation that takes an 80-year-old grandmother and says you have to give up your fee-for-service as you know it in order to get a drug piece in it," Hastert recalled telling the president. Eventually, administration officials began admitting to reporters that the aborted attempt at reform had been a fiasco but promising they would unveil a new and improved plan soon.

This week, they did just that. Or, at least, they tried. In a speech before the American Medical Association on Tuesday, Bush vowed to accommodate his critics. "All seniors should have help in buying prescription drugs," Bush said. "Seniors who are happy with the current Medicare system should be able to stay in the system and receive help for prescription drugs." It was precisely what the naysayers had wanted to hear until Bush explained the details, and it became apparent that the new plan looked an awful lot like the old one.

The "help" for prescription drugs that Bush is offering seniors who stay in traditional Medicare consists, first, of a drug discount card—which Bush promised would reduce costs by 10 to 25 percent but has been shown by a General Accounting Office study to offer average discounts of less than 10 percent. Bush is also offering to limit seniors' out-of-pocket expenses for prescriptions with a so-called catastrophic insurance plan that would pay all drug costs beyond a certain amount per year. While it's a perfectly good idea in theory, Bush pointedly avoided specifying at what level the coverage would kick in—apparently because the figure his aides had talked about days before (between $4,500 and $7,000 in annual expenses) would be financially crippling to many seniors. Finally, Bush promised low-income seniors a $600 subsidy in the form of a debit card—another nice thought but, again, not much help for a fixed-income senior who would still be responsible for all drug costs over $600 until the catastrophic insurance kicked in.

Clearly, this is nothing like a real drug benefit—the kind most Americans with private insurance have and the kind that seniors would get under Bush's plan if they were to leave

TNR *senior editor Jonathan Cohn is also a Kaiser Family Foundation Media Fellow.*

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traditional Medicare and enroll in an HMO. In other words, the new Bush reform scheme would have largely the same effect as the old: forcing seniors to choose between staying in traditional Medicare and forgoing significant help on drugs, or getting the help by enrolling in a managed care plan. Not surprisingly, the next day brought forth more unenthusiastic responses from Republicans, such as Louisiana Representative Billy Tauzin: "The bottom line is that, for those who don't want to even think about a choice here, who want to stay in fee-for-service, you have to give them an adequate drug coverage."

WHY IS MEDICARE giving Bush such fits? For one thing, he has forgotten who his supporters are—or, more precisely, *where* his supporters are. Besides being Republicans, Grassley, Hastert, Snowe, and Tauzin have another thing in common: They all represent areas with significant rural populations, and that's where managed care has been most problematic. As part of the 1997 balanced budget agreement, the federal government created Medicare+Choice, bringing more managed care options into Medicare—in effect, providing an early test of whether a proposal like Bush's could really work. The plans rushed in to enlist new members, then rushed right back out again within a few years. Overall, more than half of the plans have dropped out, leaving 2.5 million seniors scrambling for coverage. The problem has been most acute in rural areas, where sparse populations and the scarcity of doctors and hospitals make it harder for HMOs to squeeze out profits.

Today, 80 percent of rural Americans have no Medicare HMO, including the residents of Grassley's Iowa and Snowe's Maine. In other areas, such as Tauzin's district in Louisiana and Hastert's in Illinois, tens of thousands lost HMO coverage when insurers left. Given this situation, it's no wonder these Republicans are nervous about a plan that reserves full prescription coverage only for those beneficiaries enrolled in managed care. As Pennsylvania Republican John E. Peterson, chairman of the Congressional Rural Caucus, told *The New York Times,* relying on private plans "doesn't work; it isn't an option."

The other major reason Bush is running into such trouble is that he himself has literally made a career of trashing HMOs. During the 2000 campaign, he attacked Al Gore (falsely) for having a plan that would push seniors into managed care: "[I]t works like an HMO," he proclaimed in October 2000. "It acts like an HMO. It quacks like an HMO." As recently as the State of the Union—i.e., the day before he planned to announce his Medicare plan—he was still taking swipes at managed care, declaring, "Instead of bureaucrats and trial lawyers and HMOs, we must put doctors and nurses and patients back in charge of American medicine." The problem, of course, is that the managed care plans he keeps denigrating are the very ones he'd have seniors leave Medicare to join.

The irony is that the philosophy of Bush's Medicare plan is actually defensible. Those who advocate significantly expanding the role of privately run managed care plans include not just conservatives but also some well-respected liberals, such as Brookings Institute economist Henry Aaron and syndicated columnist Matt Miller (who defended the concept in these very pages several years ago). But those advocates make the case for their plans honestly, arguing that managed care will discourage seniors from consuming so much health care, thereby reducing costs. Bush, by contrast, has tried to sell his Medicare plan by pretending to be Ted Kennedy, promising to add more and more benefits to the government program seniors love and cherish. It's the way Bush has handled most of his domestic agenda: talking like a liberal while acting like a conservative. Only this time, it seems, he's not getting away with it. ■

Irbil Dispatch

Two Front

BY ELIZABETH RUBIN

THOUSANDS OF FEET toward the sky, surrounded by the snow-bald, uninhabitable Zagros Mountains of Kurdistan, sits a stone outpost where the bureaucracies of nation-states are stubbornly observed. In this case, by the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. In front of me was a ten-foot high, thick, green metal gate—that was locked. On the other side was Iraq. Intimations of nightfall were fast coloring the snowy horizon, and the fastidious Iranian guards were still burrowing in the bottom of my bag, looking to match the fax they'd received from Tehran with each of the items I had declared—models, serial numbers, colors. I was with a photographer who also had a mountain of gear she'd declared. Two Europeans paralleling our travels were acting very pleased with themselves. "No declare, no wait," said the Frenchman, a roughed-up, gray-bearded, seaman type.

Still, in the great drama before George W. Bush's war on Iraq, it is Iran, ironically, which is acting like the "good" guy in the neighborhood. Until last week's conference of the Iraqi opposition, Turkey was not letting anyone cross its borders to Iraq. (When Zalmay Khalilzad, Bush's envoy to the Iraqi opposition, tried to take along American Special Forces for security, the Turks refused. When the conference was postponed by the hour and then by the day, the Turks kept nearly 300 journalists at the border, caged in buses.) Syria sealed its borders months ago after a CNN crew filmed their mini-boat ride across the Tigris River, a natural border between Syria, Turkey, and Iraq; Syria didn't want to be seen as Bush's lackey, ferrying Westerners into the U.S.-protected no-fly zone of northern Iraq. So that left Iran. Despite the official, comic-book-style cold war with the United States—Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei battling the Great Satan, and, parallel,

Elizabeth Rubin covered the war in Afghanistan for THE NEW REPUBLIC.

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Bush battling the Axis of Evil—Iran for its own reasons was not blocking its borders. Eight hours after we set off from Tehran, the gates swung open. Two sparkling-white stretch Land Cruisers were waiting, and we waved goodbye to our Iranian Kurdish driver in his 25-year-old grumbling Toyota taxi.

UP IN SALAHUDDIN, on the western edge of the Zagros mountains, the opposition conference finally got underway. The town used to be a summer resort for Iraqis, and these days Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) head Massoud Barzani (the son of Mustafa Barzani, who led the first Kurdish insurgency against Saddam Hussein in the mid-'70s) and his clan live and operate out of a palatial compound formerly owned by Saddam. With the Turkish parliament voting on whether to accept American troops and whether to assist in creating a so-called buffer zone in the Kurdish regions, the Turkish issue dominated much of the backroom wrangling. Simply put, the Kurds do not want Turkish soldiers patrolling their streets and dictating their lives. As last week's local paper put it boldly across the banner, "TURKEY IS A BIGGER THREAT TO THE KURDS THAN SADDAM." Businessmen, college girls, everyone said they'd rather Saddam than the Turks.

During the conference, the offices of the Turkmen Front, who represent the Turkmen minority, were raided, the windows smashed. One of the delegates told me that the Turkmen leader stormed out of the conference, accusing Barzani and the KDP of intimidation. Barzani then stormed in, bellowed, "If you'd let us protect you, it wouldn't have happened," and stormed out again. The Turkmen leader was cajoled back in, but the tension, said the delegate, remains.

Meanwhile, there were also hints of trouble with the Americans. In his opening address to the Iraqi delegates, Khalilzad tried to appease everyone with a universal theme, democracy. "The claim Iraq cannot become a democracy is . . . belied by the experience in northern Iraq under the leadership of the two main Kurdish parties," he said. "The U.S. is proud to have played a role in this development." For their part, the Kurds may speak rosily of America and democracy, but they have been burned too many times by America to believe she's not her old, promise-breaking self. And, indeed, during the conference, the Americans were warning the Kurds not to invade Kirkuk, the oil-rich prize coveted by the Americans, the Iraqis, the Turks, and the Kurds, lying just 30 kilometers from the Kurdistan border. The Kurds have promised they will not, but rumor has it that both the KDP and its rival Kurdish party led by Jalal Talabani, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), have been funneling men and arms into Kirkuk for the past month. "Everybody here is going to be sold out," said a British observer. "Why would you use the Kurds if Kirkuk is part of a deal with Turkey? You hold it yourself, and later, if you need or want to, you give it away."

It's always instructive to watch the video clips that loll along between programs on state- or party-run television. Here, during a break in the conference speeches, pastoral and martial scenes of Kurdish history flickered across the screen accompanied by Kurdish national songs, and then suddenly in English I read, "Even if not one Kurd is left in Kirkuk, Kirkuk is part of Kurdistan."

Down the mountain, in the plains of Irbil—the largest city in Iraqi Kurdistan, which claims, like Jericho, to be the oldest continuously inhabited city, founded before 2300 B.C. by the Sumerians—Khalilzad's words were registered less with satisfaction than with ire. Especially in the office of Nasreen Mustafa Sideek, the minister of reconstruction and development. I met her last week shortly after the deputy prime minister of the KDP told the press that it looked like an American betrayal was looming. While I was waiting for Nasreen, her manager, a 45-year-old man in a three-piece suit, told me he'd bought a Kalashnikov rifle for the 1991 uprising, and, though he'd never had the chance to use it then, he would now against the Turks.

With her perfect English and elegant attire—a black dress with burgundy velvet flowers, burgundy scarf, and black pumps—Nasreen exudes formidability. So does her sunny and expansive office, with its bronze statue of a Kurdish woman, as Victory and Pieta, holding the slouching body of her son, a slain *peshmerga* (Kurdish guerrilla). For the last three years, Nasreen has controlled one of the biggest government budgets for reconstruction, managed the oil-for-food program, and overseen the completion of 900 houses built for displaced Kurds from Kirkuk. But, since the Turks effectively closed the border two years ago, the Kurds' revenues—from what's called smuggling or trade, depending on who's doing the calling, especially of oil—are being depleted, and the oil-for-food revenues, of which northern Iraq gets 15 percent, have effectively died now with the prospects of war.

Nasreen understands that this is one of those "delicate historic moments" when anything could take them to "zero or even minus or way ahead." As her manager, in his tirade against the Turks, had reminded me, the last historic opportunity the Kurds lost was in 1920 at the Treaty of Sevres, in which a homeland that included Kirkuk was provided for the Kurds. The Turks objected. And, at the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne, no provision was made for the Kurds. That's the one that stuck.

"Mr. Khalilzad relaxed a lot of people," said Nasreen. "But not me. . . . Yesterday, [Donald] Rumsfeld said Turkey is our partner to fight terror. If you need your coalition, take the Turks to the center and south of Iraq. We don't need them. We're your partners. If you want our army, we'll give it to you. But don't punish us by allowing Turkey to come in under the pretext of keeping law and order and disarming us. The level of crime here is zero. We keep our own law and order. I'm talking emotionally. I know. . . . We thought we'd be rewarded for what we established here." She stopped to catch her breath. "We offer an example that every U.S. official is using to justify the war with Iraq. [Paul] Wolfowitz said that many people think democracy won't work in Iraq, but look at free Iraq in Kurdistan. So in one week they use us for this argument and another they want to put us under Turkish occupation." Then she said, "People are organizing themselves to resist nonviolently. If we see Turkish troops coming in, we are ready to sit in front of the tanks with women and children." Nasreen's defi-

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ance is as natural as her anxiety. "I feel it from my family, my staff, my tribe, and it's not psychological. On Al Jazeera we hear what the Turks are saying, their right to occupy Kurdistan, to control Kirkuk and Mosul"—just over the border with Kurdish-controlled Iraq. "It's very scary for me."

Nasreen didn't get where she is through nepotism. Her father and mother were villagers who wanted to provide their eight children with better opportunities. They moved to Baghdad, where her father served in the Iraqi army until he was retired in the '70s because he was a Kurd. She studied architecture there and was finishing her thesis when the U.S. bombs began falling in 1991. The second day of the bombing, she and her brother fled to northern Iraq. In March of 1991, the Kurdish uprising began; she marched in the streets and then had to run for her life with two million other Kurds from Saddam's advancing army. She took refuge in her home village and then trekked to the Turkish border, where she sat for three days in the cold. "It was only under pressure from the media, the U.S., and Europe that the Turks opened their border," she said. Things weren't so hospitable once inside Turkey either. She slept in the rain under the eave of a school roof. She patched together her first tent from colorful clothing some local Kurds had donated to her. Just two months later, she decided she was going back to Baghdad to finish her degree. Never mind that the Iraqis might discover she was one of the rebels. It was May; negotiations between Iraqis and Kurds were going on. She finished her degree in three months and got out of Baghdad just before the negotiations broke down. She worked for the United Nations for several years and then gave up her lucrative salary to study at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government.

"One of the Turkish pretexts for coming here is the fear of refugees, but I can tell you no Kurd will think of going to Turkey today." It's not just the memory of Turkish behavior. "The situation is different. By the end of 1990, Saddam had destroyed four thousand five hundred villages out of five thousand, so Turkey was the only serviceable place for people to go," she said. "But now, with the U.N. and Kurdish administration, the people will go to the three thousand five hundred villages we managed to rebuild, not Turkey."

THE TURKS MAY or may not enter Iraqi Kurdistan, with or without a mandate, but, in the meantime, locals are trying to prepare themselves for the worst: a chemical attack by Saddam. Nasreen said her office is creating camps near the villages. Nearly everyone you ask has stored petrol to get in their cars and head for their home villages. "We talked to everyone and their uncle about gas masks, but so far nothing," said Nasreen. "We hold the U.S. responsible. You are preparing your troops, the Kuwaitis with protection, but nothing to the people who will most likely be targeted. I even have a letter from an American NGO who made a proposal to the State Department for providing us protection, and it wasn't approved."

I went down to the front lines along the road from Irbil to Kirkuk to find out how the *peshmerga* were faring. It was a sleepy scene of rolling hills and lolling soldiers. A few were spinning a gunner around in the little metal seat positioned behind a *dushka*, a long machine gun, aimed south. Cracked old blue buses smeared with diesel smoke and orange and white taxis trundled up from Baghdad-controlled Iraq. We were greeted by Saeed Hassan, a friendly, short, stocky commander and the father of two boys, dressed in traditional Kurdish garb with a spotted cloth cummerbund wrapped around the waist. He said he'd been watching the Iraqis put their new plan into action. Snaking through a canal of trenches, he led us up a hill and pointed about 200 meters away to a small berm on the opposite hill. "The Iraqis," Saeed said. According to him, they were digging new trenches and pouring in crude oil; in front of the trenches, they'd buried thousands of Valmaras, cruel mines that can cause destruction 200 meters from the explosion. He said the mines were connected by wires so that they'd detonate simultaneously. Along the side of the roads, he said, they'd planted TNT to destroy the path for any invading forces. "When the American troops come, they'll set fire to the trenches. Clouds and clouds of dark smoke will rise and confuse the Americans." Around Kirkuk it was worse—they're putting gas pipes in the trenches, he said. "Our sources in Kirkuk and the villages tell us these things." At night, he said, the Iraqis fire flares every hour to check out what the Kurds are doing, but otherwise things are quiet. But just then a choppy voice, speaking fast, shouted over Saeed's Motorola radio: "A *peshmerga* of ours was shot dead just now." ■

Is Iraq the next Lebanon?

Low Option

BY JANINE ZACHARIA

IF THERE WAS one thing Arab states had hoped to convey during their emergency summit in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh this past weekend, it was unity against war with Iraq. Instead, they could not have appeared more divided. The United Arab Emirates set off a firestorm of protest by proposing that Saddam Hussein go into exile, something many Arab states favor privately but are loath to support publicly. A Syrian proposal to ban any Arab nation from aiding the United States never got off the ground. And, after Libyan President Muammar Qaddafi called the Gulf states puppets of the United States, he and Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah got into a shouting match so vitriolic that Egyptian television cut its telecast as Abdullah stormed out of the room. The weekend wrapped up with a bland final communiqué that included a "complete rejection to any aggression on Iraq" and stressed "the necessity of

Janine Zacharia is the Washington correspondent for THE JERUSALEM POST.

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resolving the Iraqi issue through peaceful ways."

But, behind the scenes, the Arab states are actually more united than they appear in public. They all would like to see Iraq's territorial integrity preserved post-Saddam, and they all want the postwar reconstruction effort to have an international imprimatur. They also share a vision of how a new Iraqi government might look. They'd like it to be Sunni and authoritarian. If that's not possible, they might consider another unpromising model: Lebanon.

ARAB HEAVYWEIGHTS such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia are adamant that any post-Saddam government not be truly representative. If that were to happen, the elected leader would most likely be a Shia, since the Shia comprise at least 50 percent of the Iraqi population. And the overwhelmingly Sunni Arab leaders fear that a Shia leadership in Iraq would be subject to influence from Shia Iran, a concern shared in parts of the Bush administration.

But the Arab governments are not only concerned about Iran. They also fear that democratic representation might embolden democrats in their own countries. After all, in Bahrain, a Sunni monarchy rules a Shia majority, while Syria is run by an Alawite minority regime ruling over a vast majority of Sunnis. Saudi Arabia, run by a Wahabi monarchy, contains large numbers of impoverished and oppressed Shia living in the country's oil-rich Eastern Province and chafing under the control of the regime. "No one wants to see an Iranian-style Shia Supreme Leader [in Iraq]—except Iran, that is—but Saudi Arabia is dead-set against giving the Shia any real power," says one American official.

Consequently, several Arab states are trying to ensure that Iraq remains dominated by Sunnis. The Arabs could accept representative government "so long as it is not based on numbers," says one former American official who continues to work with Middle Eastern governments. Indeed, Arab officials have been telling American officials that they oppose holding a post-Saddam census in Iraq, a development that would probably reveal the extent of the country's Shia majority. The Saudis have long disliked the Pentagon's courtship of Ahmed Chalabi, the secular Shia leader of the Iraqi National Congress exile organization, and are no doubt relieved to see him quibbling with the Bush administration. Arab officials also argue that a post-Saddam Iraq should remain part of largely Sunni international bodies such as the Arab League, an idea opposed by many democracy advocates at the Pentagon who, like liberal Iraqi exile Kanan Makiya, note that Iraq has a large, non-Arab Kurdish minority.

The Arab leaders would prefer that a Sunni military leader take power in a post-Saddam Iraq, but, given Washington's call for democracy, Arab nations have started considering an alternative structure that still would fulfill their goals: an Iraqi leadership that included a representative from each of the three main ethnic groups. The Saudis would probably acquiesce to a tripartite leadership that included a Sunni, a Shia, and a Kurd, so long as they are on equal standing and it meant stability, the former American official says.

But it is a model that has failed miserably in fractured Lebanon, where a Christian president, a Sunni prime minister, and a Shia speaker of the house tried to rule together for years, until the ungainly power-sharing agreement dissolved in 1975 into an open and extremely bloody civil war. What's more, it is a vision few Iraqi-exile democrats favor—they have emphasized the need for an Iraqi federal state, not a tripartite leadership.

THAT THE LEADING Arab nations, none of which are democracies, would even consider the tripartite idea, which would involve elections, shows that their influence over American planning has waned—they are being forced to consider an option they can barely stomach. Indeed, American consultation with Arab allies has so far not been robust. "The Saudis feel left out," says one well-placed observer of the U.S.-Saudi relationship. "That's what they've been complaining about." Although the Saudi foreign minister met Bush in January and the Egyptians sent a delegation to the White House that month as well, they do not receive regular updates on the administration's thinking post-Saddam, say Arab officials, several of whom say they have little idea what the United States is planning regarding the future of Iraq.

But, even if they feel left out of postwar planning—indeed, even if they wish the conflict would never take place—the Arab states are nonetheless providing military support for the war. The Saudis are quietly allowing the Prince Sultan Air Base to serve as a command and control center. Bahrain is hosting the Navy's Fifth Fleet. Qatar's Al Udeid air base is hosting U.S. Central Command. Egypt is permitting unfettered use of the Suez Canal and unrestricted overfly rights to U.S. planes. Jordan is allowing American Special Forces to cross its border into Iraq. And roughly 70,000 American troops have already made their way to Kuwait. Asked after the Arab League summit about apparent Arab opposition to the war, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said, "If you were to put the question to the president, the president would tell you that he is indeed satisfied with the cooperation he is getting from much of the Arab world." The Saudis in particular may be motivated to cooperate out of a fear of irrelevance post-Saddam. "For fifty years, you are the major ally in terms of oil, and right now there's a chance the Iraqis will become the major ally. The Saudi value could diminish once Iraq is liberated," says one observer of U.S.-Saudi relations.

In return for their support, the Arab states hope their influence over a post-Saddam Iraq will eventually increase. "Once we join the club, then we can negotiate what Iraq will be like after the war," Saudi Arabia's ambassador to the United States, Bandar bin Sultan, was quoted as saying late last month. "But, without being part of the club, then we have no role in the day after." But American officials, at least for now, are skeptical. "Why should we discuss this with the Saudis?" asks the observer. "How can the Saudis help us put together a multiethnic, multireligious Iraq?" After all, it's not like they've done it at home. ■

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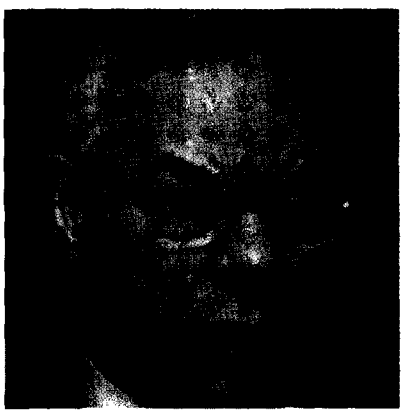
The State Department's anti-democracy plan for Iraq.

Federal Reserve

BY LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

INSIDE THE BUSH administration, the war over whether to go war is over. But the war over the war's aftermath is just beginning. On the question of how, or even whether, democracy should be established in Iraq, no two members of the Bush team seem to agree. The president only appeared to settle the issue last week when he said that he envisioned Iraqis "moving toward democracy and living in freedom" and recalled that, in the past, Americans "did not leave behind occupying armies; we left constitutions and parliaments."

Despite the president's admonition, it is precisely occupying armies, not constitutions or parliaments, which the State Department plans to leave behind in Iraq. The latest outline that America's diplomatic corps has drawn up for postwar Iraq proves the devil really does lie in the details. The plan calls for an American military governor to rule the country for up to two years, while American officers take control of Iraqi government ministries. It does call for Iraqis to participate in their country's reconstruction, but the Iraqis to whom American officials anticipate delegating this responsibility will mostly be former employees of Saddam Hussein. As for the leaders of Iraq's democratic opposition, aside from serving on a powerless "consultative council" for an indeterminate period of time, they will have virtually no say in how their country is governed. Thus, the Bush team has instructed leading Iraqi dissidents to shelve their plans for a federal political structure, in which different regions of the country would enjoy a measure of autonomy. Rather than allowing Iraqis to create a federal state—which is to say, a democratic one—Foggy Bottom, which lost the argument over whether to topple an authoritarian central government in Baghdad, has settled for the next best thing: an authoritarian central government under U.S. control.



The State Department has spent nearly a decade feuding with Iraq's democratic opposition.

ALTHOUGH THE TASK of administering postwar Iraq will fall to the U.S. military, the task of designing the occupation has fallen mostly to Foggy Bottom. Partly this is because Defense Department officials have been discouraged from addressing postwar political arrangements, lest a press leak create the impression that the president has already made a decision to go to war. Mostly, though, it is because dissecting Iraqi politics is the State Department's job—and it is a topic about which American diplomats hold deeply felt convictions.

The CIA and the State Department have spent the better part of a decade feuding with Iraq's democratic opposition. "The enemies of a democratic Iraq lie within the CIA and the State Department," said leading liberal Iraqi exile Kanan Makiya. The enmity between the Iraqi opposition on the one hand and the CIA and State Department on the other dates back to 1995, when opposition forces acting under the umbrella of the Iraqi National Congress (INC) launched an offensive against the Iraqi military, only to be denied U.S. support. State Department officials promptly spun the move as a calculated decision based on the ineptitude of the opposition forces. "These guys are a feckless bunch who couldn't hold up a 7-Eleven," said one official at the time.

INC Chairman Ahmed Chalabi responded by publicly attacking the CIA and the State Department. During the years that followed, both the CIA and Foggy Bottom sidelined the INC in favor of repeated attempts to sponsor a coup from within Saddam's regime. The State Department would not even discharge the funds allotted the INC by the 1998 congressional Iraq Liberation Act. Now, faced with the prospect of these same Iraqi dissidents seizing power in Baghdad, Foggy Bottom worries that its long-feared nightmare could soon come to life.

But the animus toward Iraq's democratic opposition is about more than bureaucratic pique. For years, the greatest fear of the diplomatic corps has been what former Secretary of State James Baker once called the "Lebanonization of Iraq." As they did prior to the 1991 Gulf war, officials at the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs bureau (NEA) make the case against federalism in Iraq by echoing Colin Powell's wisdom that it "would not contribute to the stability we want in the Middle East to have Iraq fragmented into separate Sunni, Shia, and Kurd political entities." Specifically, Foggy Bottom fears that if a Shia- and Kurd-dominated opposition alienates Central Iraq's Sunnis by, say, overthrowing Saddam, Iraq may be splintered by internecine strife and invite all sorts of regional mischief. (Hence, too, their preference for a palace coup.) "The State Department always emphasizes stability, irrespective of the character of regimes," explains the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Patrick Clawson, editor of

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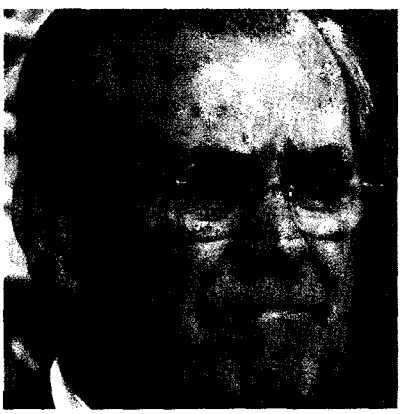
How to Build a New Iraq After Saddam. "That is the case in spades when it comes to Iraq, where their perception is that democracy is dangerous."

So Foggy Bottom has launched a worldwide search for a Sunni replacement for Saddam, has sought to disabuse the opposition of its commitment to Iraqi federalism, and, above all else, intends to retain a unitary central government in Baghdad. It is this obsession with central authority that has led the State Department to propose a modest and halfhearted plan for the removal of Saddam loyalists. The current State Department blueprint being peddled by Zalmay Khalilzad, the White House's Iraq point man, calls merely for the removal of the top three officials in each Iraqi government ministry. Internal State Department documents, summarized by administration officials, give only passing mention to vetting officials for past ties to Saddam, and, when they do, the memos create the impression that "de-Baathification" should be implemented neither deeply nor widely and that American administrators should move quickly beyond this phase. What's more, the State Department has designated an outspoken foe of the Iraqi democracy movement from the Clinton years, NEA's Thomas Warrick, as its chief "vetter" of Iraqi officials. At a gathering of Iraqi democrats in December, Warrick, along with the CIA's Ben Miller, stood in the doorway of the meeting and literally tried to block leading pro-democracy dissidents from entering. INC representative Entifadh Qanbar, who was himself prevented from getting through the door, recounts, "Warrick said, 'You can't get in, and I'll have the guards help you out.'" And, according to senior administration officials, just as much energy has been devoted to how to *protect* Saddam's aides from "score-settling" as to how to keep them out of power.



Defense Secretary Rumsfeld has no use for democratization or nation-building.

On several occasions, Foggy Bottom has taken its crusade to keep power out of democratic hands to truly bizarre lengths. For months prior to a Powell speech on democratization and the Arab world last December, NEA waged a battle to omit the word "democracy" from the administration's official pronouncements about the region. And, when President Bush employed the magic word during last week's speech, several State Department officials claim NEA's Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, James Lorocco, was alarmed by the address. Meanwhile, Khalilzad, having helped scuttle their attempt to create a provisional government, has spent most of the past month lobbying Iraqi opposition leaders to focus on reconstruction rather than political reform, arguing against the creation of a governing council for postwar Iraq, and trying to ban Chalabi from participating in it (before being overruled by the White House). In a similar vein, after commissioning and then trying to water down a report by the Iraqi Democratic Principles Working Group, State Department officials shelved the document. Foggy Bottom's animus toward the democracy movement has become so intense that, when a few of its leaders met with Dick Cheney recently, the meeting had to be arranged without the State Department's prior knowledge.

THE IRONY IS that, by undermining the prospects for Iraqi federalism, the State Department may be contributing to the very instability it intends to avert. That's because, in the absence of a federal system, each ethnic group is bound to fear domination of the center by another. By centralizing power in Baghdad, the United States encourages a zero-sum game in which the winner takes all. By contrast, under the vision of "administrative federalism" championed by Pentagon officials, which creates several territorial units per ethnic group, each group will have a say in its own governance no matter what happens in Baghdad. But the case for federalism is not merely utilitarian. Iraqi federalism amounts to a precondition for Iraqi democracy. Federalism, as the Democratic Principles Working Group report puts it, "is an extension of the principle of the separation of powers . . . the first step towards a state system resting on the principle that the rights of the part, or the minority, should never be sacrificed to the will of the majority."

The United States has a selfish interest in a federal Iraq, too. Absent an early and concrete demonstration of America's commitment to a federal state, the entire enterprise could collapse, transforming American soldiers from liberators into targets and creating the impression, fair or not, that the United States has substituted one strongman for another. This is particularly true of the Kurds, who have enjoyed the fruits of semi-autonomy since 1991 under an umbrella of U.S. air patrols—establishing municipal governments, an educational system, a law enforcement apparatus, a democratically elected assembly, and much else besides. "Look to the people of northern Iraq," Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz told an audience of Arab-Americans last week, as a model that proves "democracy is possible in Iraq."

The problem is, the Bush administration stands poised to rescind that model. According both to members of Bush's team and to Kurdish leaders, Khalilzad has instructed leading Iraqi Kurds and members of the broader Iraqi opposition movement that they should shelve their plans for a federal government. Foggy Bottom, which not long ago was hunting for a Pashtun octogenarian to rule Afghanistan, has launched a search for a Sunni octogenarian to head up a strong central government in Iraq. And the Bush team has been looking in some awfully strange places. One is the United Arab Emirates, where Khalilzad deplaned recently to woo Adnan Pachachi, Iraq's

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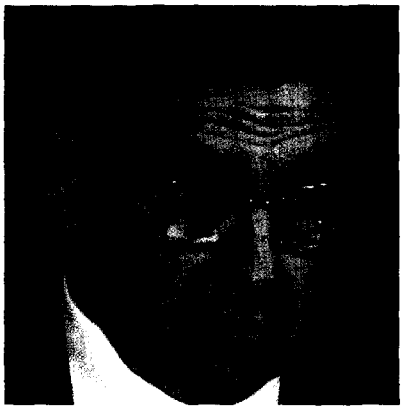
80-year-old former foreign minister, who has alleged, among other things, that the Bush team's hawks belong to a "Zionist lobby." Then there is the Iraqi National Accord (INA), a ragtag band of mostly ex-Baath officials and aides to Saddam who the State Department has been championing for years as an alternative to the INC. Initially touted as possible fomenters of a coup against Saddam, the INA, too, has become an integral part of Foggy Bottom's vision for a postwar Iraq.

ULTIMATELY, OF COURSE, the question of what role Iraqis play in postwar Baghdad depends on what role Americans play. Hence, the State Department would like a U.S. military government to remain in place for as long as two years, because this jibes neatly with the aim of a strong Iraqi center. Another possibility that several administration officials anticipate is that Powell will lobby for a U.N. resolution that transfers power to a U.N. administrator or high commissioner in the war's aftermath, which would accomplish the same end.

As for the Pentagon's view of America's role in postwar Iraq, there are actually two views. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld opposes a lengthy military occupation. Despite the inclinations of his aides, he has no use for either democratization or nation-building, which he sees as a waste of military resources. In fact, he has discouraged his subordinates from using the term "democracy" in policy papers—preferring the phrase "representative government." For the same reason, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Central Command chief Tommy Franks also want out of Iraq as quickly as possible. As for the Pentagon's civilian INC supporters, such as Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of Defense Douglas Feith, they oppose a long-term U.S. military presence for a very different reason: They believe it will retard the growth of Iraqi democracy. Echoing Chalabi's contention that a prolonged occupation "is predicated on keeping Saddam's existing structures of government, administration, and security in place," these officials argue that a U.S. occupation of the sort envisioned by the State Department would rob Iraqis of any consent in how they are governed. Hence, they want the levers of Iraqi power turned over to the country's democratic exiles within months.



Paul Wolfowitz believes a long-term U.S. military presence will retard the growth of Iraqi democracy.

The optimal solution probably lies somewhere between these positions. Because political life will begin anew as soon as the first statue of Saddam comes crashing down, it makes no sense for the U.S. military to wield absolute political power in a new Iraq. Given America's repeated claims that it intends to wage war partly on behalf of Iraq's long-suffering people, it is in America's interest to grant them a say in their own governance as soon as possible, particularly given the Arab world's suspicions about American motives. Within several months—the length of time administration officials predict it will take before Iraqis begin to view Americans less as liberators than as occupiers—the United States should begin to cede a measure of political control to the Iraqi people. This need not manifest itself in a call for immediate national elections but might come in the form of progress toward a constitution and national assembly, the establishment of an Iraqi governing council that American administrators actually listen to, municipal elections, and a commitment to devolving power from the Iraqi center.

But neither is it realistic to imagine that American forces will be able to withdraw from Iraq any time soon, much less withdraw and then refuse to hand over power to an international force. The Iraqi opposition seems to grasp this contradiction better than anyone else. As Iraqi dissident Emad Dhia put it, "We told [Wolfowitz] that we opposed a military government run by the United States. ... But Iraqis would love to see the U.S. [military] helping Iraqis run the country." The Iraqi opposition has no objection to American forces providing security, patrolling Iraq's borders, rebuilding infrastructure, and hunting for weapons of mass destruction. What they do oppose is a system that prolongs their disenfranchisement, in which case Makiya predicts the "Iraqi opposition is going to become anti-American the day after liberation." "What Iraqis really need is control over their own political sphere," says Danielle Pletka, a founder of the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq, "not the Army Corps of Engineers to rebuild a country that sits on top of the world's second-largest oil reserves." But there is no reason both aims cannot be achieved simultaneously. So long as the forces patrolling and paving Iraq's roads confine themselves to just that, the duration of their stay and their country of origin become issues of secondary importance.

All this may seem like a struggle over means rather than ends. It is not. The battle over federalism versus unitary central government and an American military occupation combined with Iraqi democratic rule versus an all-out American occupation is a conflict about whether, not when, to democratize Iraq. For behind the State Department's hand-wringing lurks a narrow realpolitik, brought to us by the same Metternichs who in the name of "stability" insisted that we not upset the Iraqi order a decade ago. To heed their advice once again would fuel the suspicion that this is a war of national egoism, create the justified impression of American hypocrisy, and abort the Bush team's campaign to democratize the Arab world before it even begins.

This would amount to a betrayal of the Iraqi people, the avowed purpose of the war, and this country's most cherished ideals. The president says the coming war in Iraq is about much more than just Iraq. But, if some of his advisers get their way, it may end up being about even less. ■

TOM WILLIAMS/NEWSCOM

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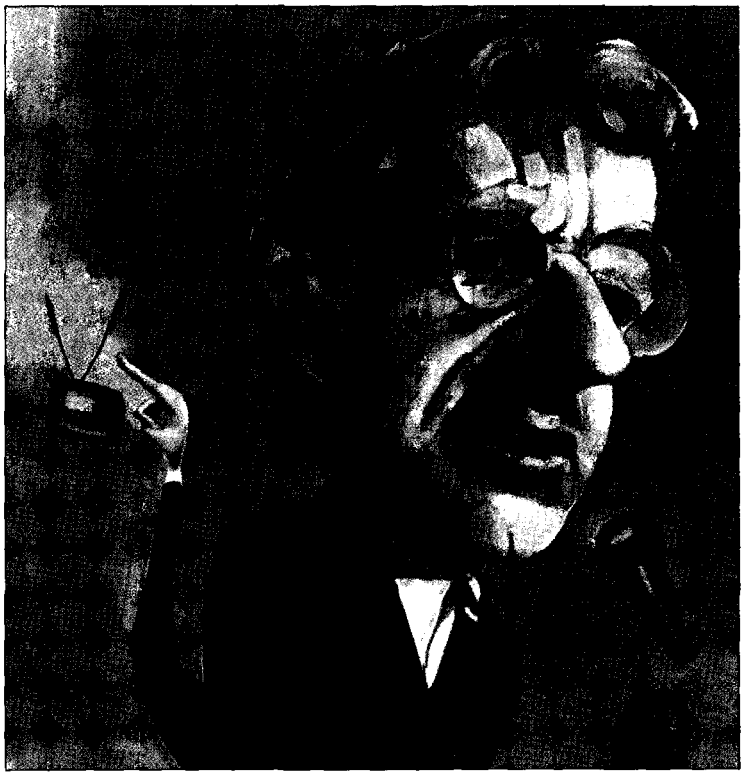
Is Jerry Springer rabid enough?

Virtually Normal

BY MICHELLE COTTLE



Will the man who took television to new lows prove too ordinary to get elected to the U.S. Senate?

WHAT DOES IT take to make Jerry Springer squirm? During his decade as the king of trash TV, Springer has endured assaults from religious leaders, politicians, community activists, and even members of his own industry. He has been charged with corrupting America's youth, dragging cultural standards to new lows, exploiting the poor and the stupid, promoting violence with on-air brawls, defrauding viewers by staging those brawls, and generally unraveling the moral fiber of this great nation. Having weathered all that, perhaps the only thing that could strike fear into the 59-year-old Springer would be a fresh threat—like spending half an hour debating conservative mad dog Ann Coulter.

For those who haven't heard, daytime's bad-boy host has been pondering a run for the U.S. Senate in Ohio next year, prompting much snickering inside the Beltway—as well as a flood of invitations from political talk shows titillated by the topic of "Mr. Springer Goes to Washington." But, when the folks at "Crossfire" called to book Springer for a Friday night in late January, they didn't mention he'd be sharing the stage with the famously venomous, easily unhinged Coulter. He only learned his fate minutes before show time when he arrived at George Washington University's Jack Morton Auditorium, where "Crossfire" is filmed before a live audience. "I was nervous," he later admitted to friends and fans backstage. "I didn't know *what* she'd say." Hosts Paul Begala and Tucker Carlson gleefully milked the potential drama, hyping a "steel-cage death match" between the very conservative Coulter and the very controversial Springer. Audience members were repeatedly cautioned to behave like civilized folk—not to boo and to please, *please* stay in their seats. The warnings proved prudent: The crowd contained a row of unruly Coulter fans, fresh from the Conservative Political Action Conference in Arlington, who whistled and whooped and bounced in their chairs each time the blonde bomb thrower's name was mentioned.

But, as the show progressed, it became clear that Springer had no intention of getting down and dirty with anyone—least of all Coulter. The two guests exchanged maybe ten words total, none of them especially caustic. Instead, Begala and Coulter did the brawling, while Springer sat calmly between them, smiling benignly. At one point, as Begala shredded Coulter's attempts to justify Halliburton's business dealings with Iraq under then-CEO Dick Cheney, Springer leaned forward to quip, "This is kinda like *my* show."

Familiar though such combat may have been, Springer avoided the fray, remaining polite and unruffled even when responding to provocative questions about both his past—Begala opened by asking about Springer's visit to a prostitute during his days as a Cincinnati city councilman—and his show, which Springer genially dismissed as mindless entertainment. "[W]e're talking about going to war. We're talking about the economy, which is in absolute chaos. We're talking about people not having health insurance. I mean serious, serious things. Who cares about the stupid show?" No doubt to the disappointment of many, it was those "serious, serious things" that Springer had come to discuss. If Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction, he spec-

SCOTT LAUMANN

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ulated at one point, "he's already given them to someone, and they will use it against us as soon as we start a war. What are we doing lighting up the world?" Nor was Springer enthusiastic about Bush's latest tax-cut plan. "[T]he alleged idea of giving the tax cut is, if you give people back more money, then they're going to spend it, and it will juice up the economy: That makes sense. But why give a wealthy person the tax cut? Do you think if you're giving a wealthy person a tax cut that therefore they can now afford to buy things? They're already rich." Instead, he argued, "take the part of the tax cut that goes to people that make a lot of money, and, you know what, use that money to subsidize health insurance for those people in America that don't have it." Summarizing the rationale of his maybe-candidacy for Senate, he explained, "[I]f I am not able to convey a point of view that relates and touches the people in that community and the state and express a point of view that they want to espouse ... then I shouldn't be elected. If people are voting just on the show, I should get no votes."

It was, all told, a fairly impressive performance—and one Springer has successfully repeated in numerous TV appearances of late. In contrast to the tacky, over-the-top, deeply unserious nature of "Jerry Springer" the show, Jerry Springer the political aspirant is low-key, thoughtful, and very serious about issues like homeland security and the high cost of prescription drugs. With his graying blond curls and wire-rimmed glasses, Springer comes across as decidedly uncontroversial—establishment even—in these political forums. Swap his open-collared sports shirts for an oxford-and-power-tie combo, and he could pass for just another buttoned-down Washingtonian.

Ironically, it's exactly this effort to develop a serious persona distinct from his sleaze-peddling reputation that makes Springer such a bad bet to win office. Obviously, the trashiness of his show is a major hurdle for him to overcome—especially in a run for the snobbish, self-important Senate. But voters have proved themselves willing to tolerate a fair degree of silliness, shallowness, ignorance, and even vulgar ridiculousness in their celebrity candidates. (Think Jesse Ventura.) Springer's deeper problem may be that—his show's outrageousness notwithstanding—personally, he's just not a colorful or charismatic enough character to turn his popular vulgarity into an asset. By and large, Americans like their celebrities to run as anti-politicians—saying things that are too impolitic for normal candidates to say, heaping scorn on both parties, and generally offering an entertaining reprieve from politics as usual. Springer, by contrast, is laboring hard to prove that he can be a regular, respectable, decent public servant. As absurd as it sounds, the man who brought topics such as "I Married My Horse" and "My Brother Is My Lover" into our living rooms may actually prove too *ordinary* to get elected to the U.S. Senate.

When your average show-business type starts flirting with politics—as either a candidate or an activist—the immediate reaction of Washington's chattering class is to sneer at his or her lack of credibility. (The parties, by contrast, like to reserve judgment until after they've gauged the star's fund-raising potential.) The much reviled Springer, however, has a stronger political resumé than many noncelebs who launch successful statewide campaigns. (Jon Corzine and George W. Bush leap immediately to mind.) Graduating from Northwestern University School of Law in 1968, Springer went to work for the presidential campaign of Robert Kennedy, whom he still idolizes today. In the wake of RFK's assassination, Springer joined a law firm and became active in the push to lower the national voting age from 21 to 18. He ran for the U.S. House in 1970 at age 26 on an antiwar platform. He lost, but in 1971 was elected to Cincinnati's city council, despite being a liberal Democrat in a conservative town. (Among his more radical proposals was a push to make the draft illegal within the city limits.) Three years later, Springer resigned when it became public that police, in a raid on a Kentucky massage parlor, had retrieved a check he had written a prostitute for oral sex. Springer, who was married at the time, apologized, and the next year voters returned him to the council—then reelected him in 1977 with enough votes to give him the mayoralty. (At the time, the councilman who received the most votes automatically became Cincinnati's mayor.) Mayor Springer promptly took government to the people, cruising neighborhoods in a van labeled JERRY SPRINGER'S MOBILE CITY HALL. His policy achievements included a reduction in bus fares and the repeal of a municipal ban on rock concerts. In 1982, after two successful terms, Springer set his sights on the Ohio governorship. When he lost, the local NBC affiliate hired him to do reporting and political commentary for the evening news, later promoting him to anchor. Over the next decade, Springer won numerous honors for his work in broadcast journalism, including an impressive ten Emmy awards.

In addition to this creditable resumé, Springer has a touching, Mario Cuomo–esque life story to sell on the stump. His parents, Margot and Richard Springer, were German Jews who fled to England in 1939, just weeks before Hitler invaded Poland. Little Gerald Norman Springer was born in Hampstead in 1944 during an air raid. When Jerry was five, the family made its crossing to the United States. "What I remember is this," he recounts as gently as his Queens accent allows. "It's January twenty-fourth. It's freezing cold on top of the Queen Mary. Everyone was bundled together as we passed the Statue of Liberty, and no one was saying a word. There was just silence." Springer later asked his mother about the moment—about what the Statue of Liberty means. "And she said, 'Ein Tag alles.' One day, everything." As Springer tells it, his family went on to live the American dream. His mom was a bank clerk in Manhattan, his dad a street vendor who sold stuffed animals. "They worked so that Evelyn, my sister, and I could go to college," gushes Springer, who earned a B.A. in political science from Tulane University. "If in one generation we go from a Holocaust where their parents and brothers and sisters were all exterminated to the life I live—one generation to this multimillionaire life of privilege—*that* is the American dream."

Of course, what makes a Senate run conceivable is neither

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Springer's personal story nor his political accomplishments but rather his hard-earned celebrity. Springer's slide into the entertainment gutter began over a business lunch one afternoon in 1991. The station's owners, who also produced several daytime talk shows, informed Springer that Phil Donahue was preparing to retire and that they wanted Springer to succeed him. "It was an assignment," insists Springer. "I didn't audition. I didn't beat anybody out. ... So I didn't go to the show with any love or with any preconceived notion of what it would be like. Frankly, I wanted to continue with the news." The "Jerry Springer Show" debuted on September 30, 1991, as yet another afternoon therapy session à la "Oprah" or "Sally Jessy Raphael." "It was," Springer shrugs, "boring." At that time, he says, "all the talk shows were trying to be like 'Oprah' and appeal to middle-aged housewives." Then "Ricki Lake" came along, targeting younger, hipper viewers. So, after three years of weak ratings, Springer and his producers decided, "In terms of business, why be one out of twenty going after Oprah's audience? Let's be one of two and split the audience with Ricki." As Springer spins it, younger meant wilder—and the wilder the show got, the higher the ratings climbed. "Then people started to go crazy, and the company made the decision that, from now on, we only can cover crazy."

"Crazy" is one of the kinder terms that has been used to describe Springer's circus. While television today is awash in tasteless, over-the-top "reality" programming, in its early years the "Jerry Springer Show"—with its chair-throwing, hair-pulling, name-calling, sexually promiscuous, occasionally naked, invariably profane guests—was a shock to the public's system. By 1998, Springer was under fire from all sides. Grant Tinker, former chairman of NBC, called the show "deplorable" and "a disgrace." Senators Joe Lieberman and Dan Coats denounced it as "the closest thing to pornography on broadcast TV." And *New York Newsday,* in a representative piece, declared the show to be "very possibly the worst program in the history of television." Viewers, meanwhile, couldn't get enough: In the February 1998 sweeps, Springer became the first host to bump Queen Oprah from her perennial perch atop the talk-show pyramid—albeit only temporarily, after which he settled in snugly at number two.

TODAY, SPRINGER'S NAME remains synonymous with the worst that pop culture has to offer. And, unsurprisingly, a Democratic Party skittish about being outflanked by Republicans on "values," isn't rushing to embrace him publicly. (Though they have been more than happy to accept his hefty donations over the years; by his own estimate Springer has given "hundred of thousands of dollars" to Democratic candidates, organizations, and causes over the last 20 years.) Back in 1999, when Ohio Democrats were trying to draft Springer to run for Senate against Mike DeWine, Senate Democratic leader Tom Daschle called him "a joke" and vowed that "Jerry Springer will never join our caucus." This time around, party leaders are being more circumspect. (Or perhaps they're simply more desperate: In Ohio, Republicans control every statewide office and both houses of the legislature.) In lieu of name-calling, Daschle has merely expressed confidence that the party can "do better." Still, as far as official Washington is concerned, a Springer candidacy is the stuff of which Letterman "Top Ten" lists are made.

Springer knows this. So does Mike Ford, his longtime friend and political adviser. (Ford managed every one of Springer's campaigns and served as his mayoral chief of staff.) "The biggest hurdle," says Ford, "is there is show-business Jerry and serious Jerry, and our hurdle is closing that gap." Already, "serious Jerry" has been giving political speeches around Ohio, while Ford travels the state meeting with Democratic leaders and activists. Repeatedly emphasizing that no decisions will be made until summer, Springer nonetheless notes that "there'll be polling and all the traditional political stuff." Both men stress that the once and perhaps future candidate never really left the political game altogether. "The show just takes six hours a week," says Springer dismissively. "I spend most of my time doing political work." Since leaving office, he has been a major political donor in both Ohio and Florida, where he lives part of the year; given countless speeches, including the keynote address at the 2000 biannual convention of the Ohio AFL-CIO; donated his time to fund-raisers; and, in recent years, become an increasingly familiar face on the Washington chat-show circuit. The fact that very few people know about Springer's political activities will actually help the campaign, insists Ford. "When you look at information theory, it says that information is received in inverse proportion to its predictability. Show-business Jerry is what most people know. If someone runs against him and piles on about the show, they're not informing. It's on the air. It's there right now. What is new is, 'Oh, he was mayor. He went to Northwestern law school.' That's new."

To run, Springer would give up his much-maligned show, now in its twelfth season (and for which he is paid more than $6 million per year). But he and Ford believe that the lowbrow reputation the show has earned Springer could be a political asset, giving him credibility as a fiery populist battling an elitist political class. While the demographics of Springer fans cross race, gender, and age lines, notes Ford, "the common denominator is income. Jerry's viewers consistently earn less than the national average." Springer adds that, while he may not be the greatest candidate, "I know I can articulate a point of view for tons of people who cannot relate to the Sunday-morning talk shows. I don't know what kind of label you want to put on them: Are they NASCAR people? I don't want to label, but they're people who just aren't touched [by politics]. And, for all kinds of reasons, I have a connection with them." Springer's voice rises and he fidgets in his chair as he recounts how, on a recent Sunday show, the pundits were sitting around making all the usual jokes about his potential candidacy. "Then one of the guys said, 'Well, if Springer runs, that's the argument against letting everybody vote. Because, if Springer runs—and I think the quote was, 'We'll have all these slack-jawed, low-life hillbillies [voting].' " (The actual quote was from *National Review*'s Jonah Gold-

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berg, warning CNN's Wolf Blitzer of the downside of high turnout: "If Jerry Springer shows up, he'll bring all these new people to the polls. They will be slack-jawed yokels, hicks, weirdos, pervs, and whatnot.") Springer sees his run as "a cultural battle in a sense: elitism versus the mass of Americans." The political establishment, he says, wants you to believe that the only people I would speak to "are the crazies on the show. But it's not. It's the mass of Americans that are just untouched." Only wealthy, politically active voters even show up on the radar of most politicians, he charges. "If every American had to vote, do you think for one second we'd have the laws we have that favor the wealthy in terms of tax breaks and tax shelters and all these things? Of *course* not. So, when [politicians] give these speeches about how great it would be to have everyone voting, they don't *mean it*! And they really are scared that, if I run, everyone will come out to vote—then they wouldn't be in office."

IT REMAINS TO be seen whether the "Jerry Springer Show"'s popularity with working-class America can translate into a wave of political support for its host. Springer does have the communication skills and the populist passion to do well on the stump, especially among folks who fancy politicians in the vein of the late firebrand Senator Paul Wellstone. But, try as he may, Springer will never be judged as a regular candidate. (This is, after all, a man who was once videotaped by a well-known porn director while engaged in a ménage à trois with a porn star and her mother—guests on his show, naturally.) Regardless of his political credentials, Springer will rise or fall as a celebrity candidate.

Unfortunately for him, Springer lacks the neatly exploitable public persona with which most celebs woo voters. For instance, former pro athletes such as Steve Largent and J. C. Watts (while not the sharpest knives in the drawer) come with a ready-made, all-American, sports-hero image that sells especially well among men. Similarly, show-business celebs like former Minnesota Governor Jesse Ventura and possibly Arnold Schwarzenegger can flourish by promoting their maverick, tough-guy, anti-political status. Ventura—a loudmouthed vulgarian who wore tights and feather boas during his days as a professional wrestler—was able to downplay the tacky details that voters might have found objectionable while clinging to his underlying macho, no-nonsense, nobody-messes-with-me image. One of his political ads even featured a Jesse "The Body" action figure fighting the villainous Special Interest Man. Schwarzenegger, meanwhile, has arguably done more to glamorize violence than any other screen star of this (or any) generation, and his preternaturally meaty physique has undoubtedly set droves of young men on the road to steroid abuse. Even so, expect a Schwarzenegger gubernatorial campaign to gloss over the particulars and wallow in the candidate's ultra-tough, straight-shooting (read: anti-political) persona.

Springer, by contrast, doesn't really have an underlying, larger-than-life persona. Even by talk-show-host standards, he isn't much of a character. "Oprah" and "The Rosie O'Donnell Show" were crafted around their hosts' compelling personalities. But Springer has always been something of a bystander on his program—an amused, bemused observer hovering in the background, occasionally stepping in to halfheartedly lecture brawling guests. Springer isn't the star of his show; the freaks are. While personable, he doesn't quite rise to the level of a Personality. And the more Springer succeeds in separating himself from his show and playing up his traditional political past, the more indistinguishable he will become from your run-of-the-mill democratic populist—but with a sexual record that makes Bill Clinton look prudish.

Compounding the problem, history suggests that Springer's political message isn't likely to work much magic. While most celebrities who take an interest in politics share Springer's liberal bent, those who wind up in office—from Ventura to Ronald Reagan to Sonny Bono and Fred Grandy (Gopher of "Love Boat" fame)—tend to spout a conservative or libertarian line. (There are, of course, exceptions, such as former Democratic Senator Bill Bradley.) It was Ventura's individualistic, get-government-off-our-backs position, complemented by his tough-talking image, that spurred droves of young men to the Minnesota polls in 1998. But with his traditional lefty philosophy (anti–death penalty, pro-choice, anti–tax cuts, antiwar, pro–affirmative action, etc.), Springer sounds like just another Hollywood liberal—even if his show is taped in Chicago. Indeed, part of the success of conservative celebrities may be that they're oddities not only among the general public but among fellow celebrities as well. Show-business liberals—Warren Beatty, Barbra Streisand, Rob Reiner, Susan Sarandon, Alec Baldwin, Janeane Garofalo, and so on—are common enough to be a little, well, boring, a characteristic Springer could easily share. With his politically conventional approach, Springer doesn't even rise to the level of an eclectic outlier like Ross Perot—who, while hardly a celebrity at the start of his presidential odyssey, had a shtick that was colorful, folksy, and occasionally paranoid enough to capture the imagination of the disenchanted masses. Springer, by contrast, stresses that he would not be an outsider, protest candidate like Perot or Ralph Nader. "I'd be running as a major-party candidate. ... I'm not interested in sending a message. I'm interested in changing some of the laws in America."

But, for a nontraditional candidate—especially one with Springer's negatives—to overcome public malaise enough to spur hordes of nonvoters to the polls, he needs to offer some sort of nontraditional message. That doesn't mean that Springer needs to run on a platform of free health care for every cross-dressing narcoleptic hooker in the Buckeye State. But celebrity candidates win *because* of their celebrity status, not *despite* it. Unless Springer finds a way to take pride in "show-business Jerry" and leverage his trash-TV celebrity into an advantage rather than a hindrance, he's liable to find that "serious Jerry" comes across as just another well-meaning, out-of-touch liberal. In other words, Springer needs more than just a pithy stump speech. An actual steel-cage death match with Ann Coulter might not be a bad place to start. ■

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BOOKS & THE ARTS

STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

Crimes and Punishments

SOMETIMES THE MOST INTERESTING aspect of a film is to imagine how the screenplay began and grew. For current instance, how did **THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE** (Universal) begin? Possibly with the impulse of the director, Alan Parker, who has been concerned with social issues from *Midnight Express* to *Mississippi Burning* and here turns to the subject of capital punishment. The chosen screenwriter, Charles Randolph, then had to find a basic premise that would be both salable and pertinent. Aha! A prisoner on death row who has been an anti-capital-punishment activist! Make him an intellectual, a former professor, who is now within days of execution. Next, though Randolph may never have seen Clint Eastwood's *True Crime,* apply one of that film's central devices—a reporter racing against the clock to save the prisoner. But this prisoner is not a static beneficiary: through flashbacks, he is an active part of the story. To give the film even more punch, the reporter is now an attractive woman. Punching away still, Randolph thinks: why not set the film in Texas, which lately had a governor, now in another job, who did not flinch from executions?

THE LIFE OF DAVID GALE
(Universal)

DARK BLUE
(United Artists)

While the film is running, the theater is suffused with the peculiar fragrance of the story conference, where ideas flash forth in profit-driven heat. Which star, with box-office clout, has shown an interest in serious subjects? Smiles around the table: Kevin Spacey. And who would fill the role of the reporter, not only with conviction but with sex, though she will not have one sexual moment in the picture? Little hesitation here: Kate Winslet. An English actress in an American role? Not to worry: she's an actress. (And indeed Winslet says that she spent months working with a dialect coach.)

Of course, the above procedure is entirely my invention: I report only what the film suggested. Yet, obviously, if a film conveys these suggestions, a touch of skepticism intervenes between us and the screen from the very beginning. Instead of seeing people in the film, we see assemblages.

Spacey, playing the professor, tries to spread holism on a collection of big scenes. His best moment comes when, as a prominent academic firebrand, he is on a television talk show and confronts the Texas governor (who does not look like the man we are all thinking of) and runs flat-faced into political boilerplate. Later, we see Spacey seduced by a student with vindictive motives who then accuses him of rape. Later still, with lashings of plot twists, Spacey is convicted of the rape and murder of a woman who was his friend and fellow activist. After years of legal process, he is now four days from the fatal injection. He arranges with a newsweekly to tell his story for half a million dollars but chiefly to give his twelve-year-old son a heritage of truth. (He does not in fact tell the truth to the reporter: she discovers it by accident.) Over and over in the course of the film, we can see Spacey, a good actor, reaching down into himself to find a source of verity for this plot-constructed character. It is not a pretty sight.

The activist friend is Laura Linney, whose beautifully honest face livens the film. Kate Winslet as the reporter provides a case study. She is one of the best actresses now on the screen, as she has proved magnificently in inferior films such as *Holy Smoke*, middling ones such as *Enigma*, and exceptional ones such as *Iris*. Here, for her own reasons, she accepted a role that doesn't exist: not a woman with background, temperament, characteristics, ambitions, but just one more papier-mâché cutout taken down from the studio shelf. Certainly she is never bad in the part: my plaint is that she doesn't even have the chance to be bad or good. She just has some stuff to get through, as plausibly as possible. We watch a prime instance of a gifted actress walking through some gross motions of a part while waiting for the script to arrive.

The plot is crammed with surprises: nothing ends up quite the way we thought it would. Thematically, that plot has a huge flaw. Everything is arranged to show that innocent men and women can be executed. But this is really a critique of police and legal work, not of capital punishment. The highest moral argument of the most impressive thinkers on this subject is not that such mistakes can be made. They argue that, whether or not the prisoner is guilty, capital punishment degrades the society that uses it. Wouldn't Spacey's brainy professor have had a glimmer of this argument?

Recently Spacey was named artistic director of the Old Vic in London—a surprising move, even though he has acted successfully in that city. (The British response to American suzerainty of a famous London theater has not yet been fully covered in the American press.) On a recent talk show Spacey said that he plans, beginning in 2004, to divide his time equally, six months a year in London and six months making one good film. Good luck to him at the Old Vic, and better luck to him in his films than *David Gale*.

Admiration to the people who made **DARK BLUE** (United Artists). Imagine finding the will to get up every morning to do another day's work on this stale story tarted up with relevance. Of course there was money to be earned, and satisfaction to be gained from doing one's job well. And of course the pall of trivial pursuit hangs over the majority of films. Admiration, limited but true, goes to all of them, but especially to people in these dark-bluey ones.

No need to imagine the genesis of this script. A market was sighted and attacked. *Dark Blue*—and I can hardly believe it even as I type it—is yet another story of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the drug trade. And it is one more instance of, as films present it, a counterpoint: the crimes of criminals are juxtaposed with crimes within the LAPD (e.g., *L.A. Confi-*

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dential, *Training Day*). This film manages to add offense to staleness. Though *David Gale* uses a grave theme for plot trickery, at least it plunges into the theme. In *Dark Blue* the serious theme is mere trimming. The "bookends" between which the story plays in flashback are the African American response in Los Angeles to the acquittal of the policemen in the Rodney King beating trial. The main story has nothing to do with the trial: it simply utilizes that grave matter for aggrandizement.

The leading role is a (yes, one more) veteran detective, son and grandson of policemen, who has devised his private legal-moral code regarding the shooting of criminals. His behavior is clarified, along with his influence on his new young partner, as they deal with cases. While this is going on, we see, as these detectives do not, corruption in the department around them. The film moves from tough realism to a finish, at a ceremony where the vet is to be promoted, that is Movieland at its goofiest.

The vet is played by Kurt Russell, who, besides the will to get up in the morning, has lots of luck. I can think of no star who is a less appealing person or a more predictable actor, yet he keeps working. With Spacey's performance in *David Gale*, we can see him groping frantically for truth; with Russell, there is no such groping. He remembers what was dealt out last time in such a situation, by himself or others, and deals it out again. His acting seems made of cards that are well-thumbed. ■

Michael B. Oren

Schindler's Liszt

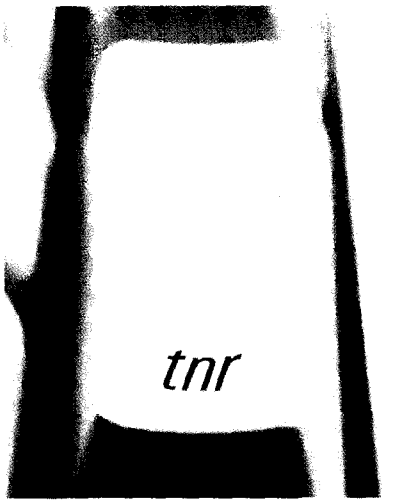
Roman Polanski's mistake about the Holocaust.

To describe Roman Polanski's film *The Pianist* in less than superlatives might get one branded obtuse or hard-hearted. "A powerfully meticulous epic," extolled Richard Corliss in *Time*. "A remarkable story, handled with an expert lack of sentimentality," the *New Statesman*'s Philip Kerr agreed. "It doesn't hit a false note." *Newsweek*, weirdly greeting the movie's release "just in time for Christmas," touted its honesty, which is "untainted by executives obsessed with political correctness, test audiences, and Monday-morning box-office reports." The same issue of *The Economist* that applauded Steven Spielberg's *Catch Me If You Can* as a "welcome change from Auschwitz" praised *The Pianist* for establishing Polanski as "one of our greatest living film-makers." And most effusive was Terrence Rafferty in *The New York Times*, who rhapsodized about "achingly precise images" and "uncanny depth and richness." This, he said, is the film for which Polanski has been "rehearsing for his whole life." *The Pianist* won the Palme d'Or at Cannes and prizes from the Académie Française and the European Film Awards. It won Césars (France's Oscar) and BAFTAs (Britain's Oscar) for best film and best director, and it has been nominated for best picture in this year's Academy Awards.

All these accolades are surprising for a film that is marred by two-dimensional performances, dozens of undeveloped characters, a sluggish plot, and a protagonist who learns nothing from his horrific experiences. Perhaps the praise for *The Pianist* is just the inevitable consequence of its subject matter. A director who escaped the Kraków ghetto as a child and whose mother perished in Auschwitz has made a film about the Holocaust. This confers upon it immediate cultural sanctity. Never mind that the film brings no departure from Polanski's longtime preoccupation with cruelty and isolation. It also adds exactly nothing to the iconography or the understanding of the Holocaust: we have already seen these images of Jews randomly selected and shot, and more graphically, in *Schindler's List*.

But I have my own suspicion about the reasons for the critical success of *The Pianist*, especially in Europe. Here is a film that conflates the Jew's identity as victim with the Jew's role as savior; that reduces Europe's guilt to a specific evil and purifies

Michael B. Oren is a senior fellow at the Shalem Center in Jerusalem and the author of Six Days of War: June 1967 and the Making of the Modern Middle East *(Oxford University Press).*



Hot Button Issues

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it. Here, at last, is the film that Europe has been waiting for: the one that gets it off the hook. In this sense, this film full of bad news is really full of good news. It holds out the possibility of absolution.

THE *PIANIST* IS BASED ON THE book of the same name by Wladyslaw Szpilman, a composer of popular songs and a performer on Poland's state radio. The well-named Szpilman hardly portrays himself as heroic. Twenty-six years old and still living at home, shorn of intimate relations, he reserves his ardor for music—so fervently, so exclusively, that he scarcely notices German bombs crashing near his Warsaw studio as the German invasion begins in September 1939. He is an able-bodied man, but he ignores the government's call for all such men to join in the city's defense. After the Nazi occupation, when Jews are ordered to wear Star of David armbands and to relocate to the ghetto, Szpilman's brother Henryk resists these edicts, but Wlad complies with them impassively.

Feckless, effete, Szpilman clearly considers himself an aristocrat, in spite of his bourgeois roots, and a Pole, in spite of his swarthiness. Judaism and Jewishness have no place whatsoever in his life, the passage of which he marks, in wartime, by Christmases uncelebrated. When he is confronted with the squalor and the suffering of the ghetto—"an anthill under threat"—his attitude toward Jews toggles between indifference and disgust:

> Merely getting from the tram stop to the nearest shop was not easy. Dozens of beggars lay in wait for this brief moment of encounter with a prosperous citizen, mobbing him by pulling at his clothes, barring his way, begging, weeping, shouting, threatening. But it was foolish for anyone to feel sympathy and give a beggar something, for then the shouting would rise to a howl. That signal would bring more and more wretched figures streaming up from all sides, and the Good Samaritan would find himself besieged, hemmed in by ragged apparitions spraying him with tubercular saliva, by children covered with oozing sores who were pushed into his path, by gesticulating stumps of arms, blinded eyes, toothless, stinking open mouths, all begging for mercy at this, the last moment of their lives, as if their end could be delayed only by instant support.

No one can accuse Szpilman of being a Good Samaritan, much less of identifying with the "tubercular" Jews around him. By contrast, his book praises the charitable Poles who hurl sacks of food over the ghetto walls, and it generally downplays Polish anti-Semitism and Polish support for the Final Solution. Ukrainians and Lithuanians are bad, but Poles are almost uniformly virtuous and brave, or they are justifiably inhibited from courage by their fear of German retribution. Szpilman always refers to his oppressors as Germans, never as Nazis. Germans conquer Poles, Nazis kill Jews.

Though he is detached from the Jewish people, Szpilman remains intensely loyal to his family—to his parents and his two sisters, and even to Henryk, who assails him for playing at a decadent café and for begging for his release from a Gestapo prison. Szpilman's efforts to keep his family together and fed come to naught in August 1942, with the liquidation of most of the ghetto. While waiting for the train to arrive, Szpilman listens as a local dentist rants: "It's a disgrace to us all! We're letting them take us to our death like sheep to the slaughter! If we attacked the Germans, half a million of us, we could break out of the ghetto, or at least die honorably, not as a stain on the face of history!" Szpilman's father, a violinist, can only shrug and simper. "We're not heroes!" he exclaims. "We're perfectly ordinary people, which is why we prefer to risk hoping for that ten percent chance of living."

THE DIALOGUE, REPLICATED almost verbatim in the film, demarcates the polarity of Jewish choices, but Szpilman proves that there is a third way. Plucked out of line by an otherwise despicable Jewish policeman, he is spared the cattle car to Treblinka. While his family is driven like sheep to the slaughter, Szpilman is led lamb-like to salvation. First a Judenrat friend secures him work on a construction crew, and then, when physical labor proves too strenuous for Szpilman, he is made a storeroom clerk. He survives selections and arbitrary executions, but his deepest fears are of losing his concert reviews and of frostbite, which is ruining his fingers. Though his storeroom serves as a conduit for smuggled weapons, Szpilman will not fight. Rather, with the help of benevolent Poles, he hides out in vacant apartments. By the last winter of the war, Szpilman is emaciated and delirious, but he is obsessed with the danger that a splinter in his thumb poses to his future musical career.

Finally, while scrounging in an abandoned house for food, Szpilman comes face-to-face with a German officer. Instead of drawing his revolver, the officer asks Szpilman what he does for a living, and then leads him to a piano. Stiff and unpracticed, Szpilman manages to perform Chopin's Nocturne in C-Sharp Minor, whereupon the officer steeves him in an attic directly above the German headquarters and feeds him. After the Germans retreat, Szpilman emerges wearing the military coat the officer left him and is nearly shot by liberating Polish troops (in the film, Soviet troops). Only by raising his hands and shouting, "I'm Polish! I'm Polish!" does he succeed in saving himself.

The officer's name, Wilm Hosenfeld, is revealed only in the book's postscript. A recreational reserve officer in his late forties, Hosenfeld was a committed teacher and family man, an ardent Catholic who abhorred Nazism. He hazarded to keep a diary in which, on September 1, 1942, he asked: "Why did this war have to happen at all?" This was his answer:

> Because humanity had to be shown where its godlessness was taking it. . . . This denial of God's commandments leads us to all the other immoral manifestations of greed—unjust self-enrichment, hatred, deceit, sexual license resulting in infertility and the downfall of the German people. God allows all this to happen . . . to show mankind that without him we are only animals in conflict, who believe we have to destroy each other. We will not listen to the divine commandment: "Love one another" . . . and must die, guilty and innocent alike.

And Hosenfeld did more than write. He repeatedly risked his life to rescue others, Poles and Jews, from extermination. These survivors, Szpilman among them, later tried unsuccessfully to obtain Hosenfeld's release from a Soviet labor camp, where he died in 1952.

After the war, Szpilman returned to his old job at the Polish state radio, and to composing music, popular and classical. His memoir, published as *Death of a City* in 1946 and produced as a film, *Warsaw Robinson,* was suppressed by the Communists, who bristled at its harsh portrayal of Ukrainians but re-released it with scenes of Soviet soldiers liberating Warsaw. The book, re-named *The Pianist,* re-appeared in 1999, a year before Szpilman's death. It soon caught the eye of Roman Polanski.

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THERE ARE, OF COURSE, MYRIAD Holocaust stories—of murderous kapos and of rabbis who praised God on the way to the gas chambers, of Anne Frank and Mordechai Anielewicz and Janusz Korczak (who is fleetingly seen in *The Pianist* as a half-mad Pied Piper clowning for his children). All of these stories are true. So, of course, is Szpilman's story. But a director who wishes to interpret the Holocaust in film can choose among many versions of its hell. Why did Polanski pick Szpilman's version? "The exciting thing was . . . that it was not my personal story," explained Polanski (who had declined to direct *Schindler's List* because its location in Kraków was too painful for him). "It helped me re-create the events without talking about myself or people around me." A noble impulse, to be sure, except for the fact that Polanski did not merely re-create Szpilman's idiosyncratic book. He also altered, embellished, and distorted it.

The film's early scenes, for example, introduce us to Dorota—blonde, virginal, Polish, a fledgling cellist. Romance beckons between her and Szpilman, but the bond is never consummated. Dorota does manage to exclaim, "This is disgraceful!" when confronted with a "No Jews Allowed" sign on a restaurant, and again, "Disgraceful! It's too absurd," observing Jews being herded into the ghetto. Later in the film she re-appears, pregnant, and endangers herself to hide Szpilman. "No one thought they'd hold out for so long," she says to him while watching the ghetto uprising from his window. "My God, did they fight!" And when the pianist sighs, "What good did it do?" she tells him, "They died with dignity. Now the Poles will rebel."

Dorota is a fetching and inspiring figure—and a figure completely fabricated for the film. It is almost as if Polanski, too, was frustrated by the passivity and the abjection of his hero, and so he proceeded to correct Szpilman's universe by furnishing it with an admirer of heroism. But the lofty figure with which he corrects the moral and emotional situation is a Pole, an apotheosis of Polish goodness, a gentile who instructs the Jew in honor, and likens Polish suffering to Jewish suffering. She plays Mary to actor Adrian Brody's Jesus—I mean Adrian Brody's Szpilman, gaunt, bearded, weepy-eyed, unmistakably Christ-like in his agonies. In reality, Szpilman's hideout was nowhere near the ghetto. The Poles did indeed rise in revolt, but more than a year later.

Unlike the figure of Dorota, the figure of Henryk is genuine. Szpilman's brother was a bibliophile who, according to the book, "took out a small Oxford edition of Shakespeare" and read in it while awaiting deportation. But in the film Polanski improves on the historical truth, and has Henryk read *The Merchant of Venice,* and even recite Shylock's rejection of Christian forbearance: "If you wrong us, shall we not revenge?" His is a soul sullied by anger, impervious to the sublime music that soothes his brother's (and his father's) rage. The problem is that the real Henryk was not at all a coarse creature of ethnic fury. He was himself a musician, a violinist—a fact that Polanski chooses to conceal. One cannot be an avenging Jew, you see, *and* a musician. One cannot demand vengeance *and* live.

Which brings us to the film's most poignant misrepresentation. All that we know about Wilm Hosenfeld from Szpilman's book—his long-standing opposition to Hitler, his courage, his values—is withheld in the film. Instead we are given a figure half Hosenfeld's age, a senior staff commander and Third Reich poster boy, a Nazi. Thus duped, we can easily believe that had Szpilman identified himself as a spot welder, say, instead of a pianist, Hosenfeld

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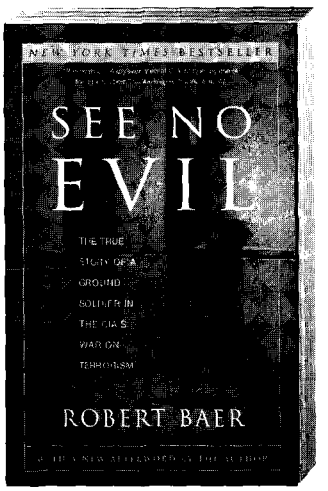

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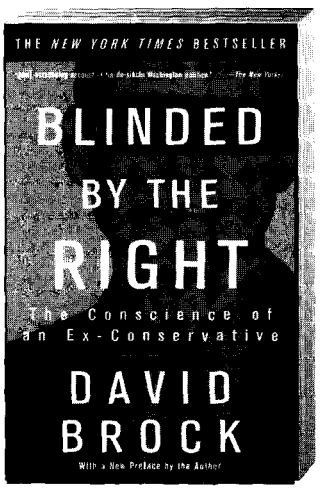

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would have shot him instantly. Ignorant of the real Hosenfeld's character, we see him as a monster transformed by music—a particularly Germanic redemption—and music played flawlessly, implausibly, by a physically devastated Jew. Reborn, Hosenfeld can harbor the *Jude,* as he calls Szpilman in the film (but not in the book), and give him his coat, as Christ commands. "You must survive, God wills it," Hosenfeld tells Szpilman with a faith that is fully documented in the book but in the film seems unaccountably newfound.

"Roman Polanski's contribution to the script is enormous," *The Pianist*'s screenwriter Ronald Harwood (né Horwitz) said. "Many solutions . . . are taken from his own personal experience." That experience includes Polanski's escape from Kraków at age seven, and perhaps also the more recent memory of his flight from rape charges in the United States. Since then, Polanski has found shelter in Europe, and *The Pianist* is one way to express his gratitude. In accepting the Palme d'Or, Polanski declared that he was proud to direct "a film that represents Poland," and not surprisingly, *The Pianist,* in particular the Hosenfeld scenes, has been acclaimed throughout Europe. Filmed in Berlin and Warsaw, financed by French cable television, it is a perfect product of Europe, made for its benefit.

For Wladyslaw Szpilman is Europe's stereotypical Jew: cosmopolitan, artistic, child-like, godless, rootless, utterly unprepared for history, and averse to power. Those same adjectives describe a certain contemporary European ideal. (The unfortunate political consequences of that ideal have been analyzed sharply by Robert Kagan.) By conflating Jewish identity and European identity—note the interplay of classical and klezmer melodies in the score—*The Pianist* has the effect of absolving Europe of its guilt. The "true" European, indistinguishable from the Jew in his humanism and his cultivation, could not have perpetrated the Holocaust. Only a Nazi, an aberration, damned by his lust for power, could have committed that terrible crime. Yet even for Nazis there is hope. Music—disembodied, immaculate, ineffable—can redeem them. And that is the job of Szpilman, the Jew who survives by dint of his sheepishness and who turns the other cheek, this secular Semitic Christ who saves sinners with art, which is the modern European equivalent of Christian love.

Salvation of sorts also awaits Szpilman. Resurrected after the war, he searches not for his missing family—those last ties to tradition are cut—but for the German officer, and devotes the rest of his life to music, silently suffering under communism. "It's as if Szpilman had no soul, and no will, apart from an endless desire to tickle the keys," wrote *The New Yorker*'s David Denby in one of the only shrewd reviews of the film. But the failure of the film lies not only in its emotional shallowness, but also in its moral and historical shallowness. The final legends on the screen tell not of the millions of Jews murdered in Poland, but of the fate of Wilm Hosenfeld and the undying music of Szpilman.

Brave critics took *Schindler's List* to task for using Jews as props for a German's morality play, and *Life Is Beautiful* for sugarcoating the camps. The former diminished the humanity of the victims; the latter diminished the guilt of the perpetrators. *The Pianist* manages to repeat both these sins. Is it really so difficult to represent the Jew as a full and free-willed human being, without diluting the horror? ■

Alan Wolfe

Buying Alone

A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America
By Lizabeth Cohen
(Alfred A. Knopf, 567 pp., $35)

Whether responding to world events or proposing domestic policy initiatives, the Bush administration seems to be guided by one simple imperative: buy. The way to demonstrate our resolve against jihad, the president asserted with considerable conviction after September 11, was to shop; and not even the administration's plan to go to war in Iraq has provoked the president to consider the possibility that in the name of national security Americans ought to consume less energy. At home, the Bush administration's response to what is increasingly perceived as its own recession is, similarly, to put as much money into the hands of consumers as possible. In fact, the more money people or corporations have with which to consume, the more money the Bush administration wants to give them.

The administration's emphasis on buying is in part a carefully considered strategy. Republicans discovered during the Reagan years that tax cuts constitute a pre-emptive strike against future public policy. Preemption, indeed. Why wait to kill a program until it has popular support and powerful interest groups behind it, when you can abort it—so to speak—before it even comes into being? Although polls consistently show that Americans are willing to support tax increases if they finance credible services, voters (or so legislators of both parties agree) cannot resist the promise of more disposable income. When the Framers talked about the power of the purse, little did they know that the most powerful purses would prove not to be the ones in the government's hands.

Still, the administration's emphasis on spending teaches us that not all talk of consumption is willful. The terrorist attack against us was so completely unexpected that we must assume that the president, when he urged us to consume, was not reading from Karl Rove's playbook. Instead Bush spoke in a language so ingrained in the American consciousness as to seem perfectly natural. Consumption is the first thing that came to mind when he required a definition of the American way of life because consumption has become the American way of life. Our freedoms are enviable and ought to make us inordinately proud, yet it was not the Bill of Rights to which the president called our attention—which is understandable, given his administration's contempt for some of its provisions—but the right to buy and to sell what we choose. It made intuitive sense to us that a man as devoted to unfreedom as Osama bin Laden would choose to ally himself with the poorest country in the world. Over there, they wear veils because they cannot buy skirts. Here, we can speak our minds and we can satisfy our desires anytime, as long as we have the cash.

Lizabeth Cohen's refreshingly bold and ambitious book is an effort to explain how

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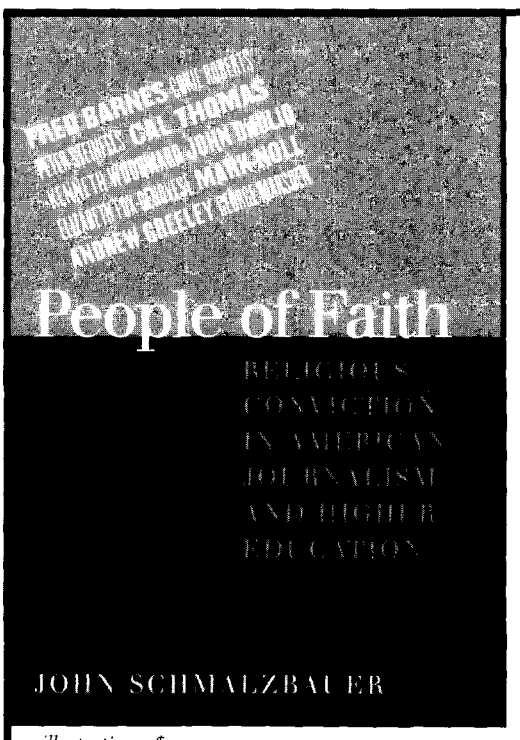
the republic for which we stand came to be shaped by our economy's insatiable demand for demand. Cohen breaks sharply with an often frustrating tendency in contemporary historiography. For the past two or three decades, historians have been studiously thinking small. Persuaded that real life is often more complicated than sweeping generalizations about "modernity" or "progress," they brought to life the factories in which people worked, and the families in which they were raised and raised others, and the communities in which they lived. As important as social history has been, however, it has also been mind-numbingly narrow in its evocation of detail and in its reluctance to consider the larger meanings of its findings. But Cohen thinks big. Although she pays homage to social history by focusing on one place, the northern New Jersey suburbs in which she grew up, she has also taken on a large subject—in important ways, the largest of all subjects in its ubiquity and in its power to influence the kinds of lives that Americans lead. One hopes that her book will stimulate her colleagues to take similar risks, even the risk of emulating historians of previous generations whose efforts at intellectual synthesis and grand narrative are treated now with contempt by postmodern pygmies.

While Cohen breaks with one academic convention, however, she adheres faithfully to another. For her, storytelling must have didactic purposes, and her purposes are all conventionally left-wing. She wants to bring into the picture the experiences of women and African Americans, often doing so in ways that seem dutiful more than enlightening. And she makes no bones about who, in her opinion, are the good people (New Deal regulators, World War II price controllers, Betty Furness, Jesse Jackson, and numerous grassroots folks who opposed suburban malls and racist companies) and who are the bad people (corporate executives, sprawl developers, market researchers, and nearly all Republicans). Cohen is entitled to her views, of course; but the truth is that consumption is an activity difficult to weave into a progressive understanding of how the world is supposed to work. There is no necessary linkage between buying things, no matter what is purchased or how, and the struggle to create a more equal or more democratic society. Indeed, trying to organize people around consumption frequently results in a petty-bourgeois approach to politics that is sharply at odds with a progressive agenda.

Cohen's history is impeccable; her almost superhuman investigations into obscure sources and archives bring many rewards, and she writes well enough to sustain a reader's attention throughout a very long book. Yet the very thoroughness of her narrative serves to undermine the conclusions that she wants her reader to draw from it. *A Consumers' Republic* is best read as an account of how consumption came to play such a pronounced role in American public life, not as a guide to what we ought to do about it.

Cohen begins her book with the New Deal, appropriately enough, since the Great Depression, at least in the view of Keynesians, was the consequence of insufficient demand. The Roosevelt administration was intent on spending more, but it was divided, Cohen argues, over the proper means by which to do so. One method, more explicitly Keynesian, relied on what she calls "the purchaser consumer," the American whose spending would lead us out of economic despondency. Among Roosevelt's famous "Four Freedoms" was freedom from want, represented in the equally famous Norman Rockwell magazine cover, which, Cohen writes, can best be viewed "as a celebration of the plenitude that American families reaped through their participation in a mass consumer economy." Against this rather limited notion of the obligation to spend, Cohen much prefers what she calls the ideal of the "citizen consumer," which "sought consumer representation in government and new legislation and regulation to protect consumers better in the marketplace." The 1930s, in her account, are notable for the number of grassroots consumer movements, often led by women or African Americans, that tried to mobilize purchasing power for political ends such as equality and solidarity.

The ideal of the citizen consumer received considerable energy from the need to mobilize domestic support during World War II. Wartime, in Cohen's view, came as close to realizing the proper model of consumer conduct as America would ever experience. Cohen cites the patriotic "Consumer Pledge Song" that one American in 1942 set to the tune of "The Battle Hymn of the Republic." Its chorus proclaimed:



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I will be a wise consumer,
Gladly do so with humor,
That's the way to win the sooner
To Peace and Victory.

The Office of Price Administration, Cohen is eager to point out, was run by enlightened policymakers such as Chester Bowles, who listened carefully to the consumer advocates, many of them women, whom Cohen so admires. Price controls, in her view, made everyone a bit more equal, contributing to the sense of fairness required for effective wartime solidarity. So laudatory was the consumer ideal developed during World War II that Cohen views it as a model for the postwar economy. "Essential to the success of this conception," she observes, "was the extension of price and rent controls beyond victory into peacetime, so as to prevent the spiraling effects of inflation that had proved so damaging after World War I and to protect the progress toward economic equality made during wartime."

The country, needless to say, did not follow such advice. In 1947, Walt Disney's Scrooge McDuck made his first appearance in American popular culture, underscoring William F. Whyte's comment that "thrift is now un-American." The force of consumption had been unleashed, and its power could not be curtailed. "Wherever one looked in the aftermath of war," Cohen writes, "one found a vision of postwar America where the general good would best be served not by frugality or even moderation, but by individuals pursuing personal wants in a flourishing mass consumption marketplace."

To demonstrate the hold of consumption on postwar Americans, Cohen chooses to focus on what, for most Americans, was their single biggest good: their house. Twenty-five percent of all American homes in 1960 were built during the 1950s. (Cohen has a special talent for finding telling bits of evidence to support her story.) The homes themselves, the appliances with which they were stocked, and the cars necessary to reach them together gave birth to what Cohen calls "the Consumers' Republic," which she defines as a society bent on achieving "the socially progressive end of economic equality without requiring politically progressive means of redistributing existing wealth." Mass consumption settled the dispute between competing conceptions of the good citizen that had fought each other during the Great Depression and World War II.

Wake-Up Call

Poor Sam Peabody, Peabody, Peabody,
says the white-throated sparrow

in folk translation, its song quavering
and thin as a letter that might be slid

beneath my bedroom door,
telling me to wake up to the day's

allotted favors, enough to stymie
leaping cats and diving hawks.

Just a taste. A few berries from the bush.
A few seeds on the tongue.

A lean song, robbed of the robin's
lushness, the mockingbird's verve,

calling me to join the Peabodies,
to sit up in bed, one more time, and whistle.

ROBERT LOWES

The tale of America's preoccupation with consumption in the postwar years has been told many times, including by contemporaries such as Vance Packard and David Riesman. Cohen's objective is to link that tale with a political one. Consumption, she argues, shaped not only our bodies but also our body politic; it influenced our public life as much as it responded to our private wants. We, not the Russians, had created the first classless society, our politicians of the 1950s declared. Businessmen could proclaim themselves true stewards of our society, responsible for the goods we all came to enjoy. In Cohen's consumers' republic, credit cards replaced the voting booth as the proper means of registering opinion. Although critics such as John Kenneth Galbraith warned that we were engaged in mass deception by seeking satisfaction through consumption, we paid little heed, so certain were we that we had discovered "an elaborate, integrated ideal of economic abundance and democratic political freedom, both equitably distributed, that became almost a national civic religion from the late 1940s into the 1970s."

The birth of the consumers' republic, in Cohen's account, also shaped our understandings of gender, class, and race, transforming more compelling ideals about responsible consumption revealed by depression and war into passive ones that left the status quo in place. Women may have been active in the New Deal and in wartime experiences with price controls, but in the postwar years they not only retreated from the ideal of the citizen consumer, they even lost their hold on purchasing power. Seen through the lens of gender, legislation such as the GI Bill or consumer practices such as credit cards seem like efforts to reimpose patriarchy. Since most GIs were men, men benefited disproportionately from legislation designed to reward them. Not only that, but women, as the head of New Jersey's Advisory Commission on Women Veterans put it many years later, "don't categorize themselves as veterans." Men also received special advantages in the private market. Mortgages and credit cards were issued in their names. As late as the 1970s, Cohen reports, women whose incomes were listed on mortgage applications were asked by the Veterans Administration to submit letters certifying that they were sterile or—where is the religious right when we need it?—committed to birth control or willing to undergo an abortion. We all know that after the war Rosie the Riveter was sent home. Cohen shows that the means of transportation upon which she relied was the gravy train that made America so prosperous.

With so much of her focus on housing, Cohen has no trouble demonstrating the ways in which consumption reinforced racial inequality, for the segregation of home purchasing and home financing that continues up to the present is one of America's greatest shames. In 1953, the largest town in America with no black residents was Levittown on Long Island; by 1960, it had only 57 blacks, and by 1980, that number actually went down to 45. When Cohen shifts her attention to New Jersey, the most suburban state in the country, the record is even more sorrowful. It took three major decisions of the New Jersey Supreme Court and an act of the legislature before the residents of Mount Laurel, a rapidly expanding suburb about twenty miles from Philadelphia, would accept mixed housing in their community.

New Jersey is also the state that pioneered the development of suburban malls,

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with a prime example in Paramus, seven miles from the George Washington Bridge, which in 1957 was the largest mall in America. (Cohen provides a picture of herself and her sister in 1956 as properly dressed little girls in front of their Paramus home, perhaps on their way out to shop.) The mall did not so much replace the city as re-create it in controlled circumstances located at some remove from where people actually lived. Offering everything the consumer could possibly want—except, as one reporter cited by Cohen commented, a funeral parlor—the mall not only sold goods but also established a new model by which democracy would be organized.

Speech, Cohen goes to some length to show, would be less free in the mall than it was in the town square, because under these new arrangements the First Amendment came into direct conflict with property rights and, at least in some places, was considerably restricted. (New Jersey was actually one of the states in which speech in malls was protected.) Along similar lines, malls undermined equality, in Cohen's view, because they were quickly segregated by gender; wives spent their time there spending what their husbands made in the city. Intent on offering low prices, shops in the malls wanted to hold down labor costs, which undercut the ability of unions to organize their employees. "Overall, an important shift from one kind of social order to another took place between 1950 and 1980 with major consequences for Americans," Cohen writes, and the mall was responsible for that shift.

To get people into malls, it is important to stimulate their wants, which leads Cohen into the dark realms of marketing and consumer research. One theme dominates her discussion of these subjects. In theory, consumption, whether we like it or not, ought to unify us, because we all become consumers of roughly similar goods. In reality, marketing specialists discovered in the postwar years that the best way to sell goods is to segment the audience that is buying them. A handful of beer makers replaced many local and independent ones, but in order to mimic the diversity that they abolished they proceeded to market a variety of beers with different names appealing to different kinds of beer drinkers. The same happened with cars, breakfast cereals, laundry detergents, and even newspapers and television stations. "Much the way suburban residential communities and shopping centers, originally conceived to be widely accessible new postwar spaces, became increasingly stratified by class and race as they targeted distinct populations," Cohen concludes, "so too as the post-war era progressed did the mass market itself fracture into numerous constituent parts." Once again, consumption determined politics. We shopped alone before we bowled alone. Segmented into our zip codes, is it any wonder that our politics became so contentious and our unity around a common conception of the good so impossible?

One ray of hope broke the depressing downward spiral away from the enlightened consumer: the Kennedy years. Seemingly out of nowhere, books began to appear showing us how unsafe were our cars and how unattractive were our homes. As difficult to believe as it may seem in the age of George W. Bush, legislators rushed to regulate industries, establishing standards to reverse environmental degradation and to ban unsafe products. This was the time when we worried about inflammable pajamas and began to give up our *Liebestod* with tobacco. Celebrating this "third wave" of consumer activism, Cohen nonetheless concludes that it made no real dent in the creation of the consumers' republic. Protection and regulation were not accompanied by incorporation; consumers never achieved "a permanent voice in government through a separate department of the consumer or other such agency within the executive branch." Without secure footing, it all eventually came to naught. Jimmy Carter scolded us for our "worship [of] self-indulgence and consumption," and we responded by electing General Electric's Ronald Reagan in his place.

Cohen, like America, runs out of energy during the Carter years. She devotes just a few pages to the Reagan, Bush, Clinton, and Bush II administrations. Still, she does not shy away from big themes. Briefly surveying the consumer landscape of the present, Cohen sees ever more depressing consequences of the historical events that she has recounted. Catalogue buying and Web-based commerce threaten to undo the malls with even more privatized forms of shopping. Public spaces such as libraries attract patrons by opening branches of Starbucks. Housing developments put up gates. "A history that extends into our own lifetimes, that continues to shape our daily lives, is hard to bring to a conclusion," Cohen remarks. Indeed it is, for we are in the middle of a period in which modes of consumption are changing before our eyes—difficult enough terrain for economists to capture with their models, let alone historians with their archives.

On her largest point, Lizabeth Cohen is right: the way we buy does influence to a considerable degree the way we come together as citizens. Considering how much time we spend shopping or inhaling messages urging us to shop, how could our politics not resist modeling itself on economics? Both the ways in which Americans elect their politicians and the means by which those politicians fashion programs and policies bear an eerie resemblance to the segmented markets, the focus group techniques, the short-attention-span messages, and the consumer-driven product development Cohen chronicles. It is a long way from *The Federalist Papers* to *The O'Reilly Factor.*

The problem that Cohen faces is that consumption has proved so powerful as to render pathetic—if not obsolete—the alternatives that she hopes our history offers. This problem revealed itself right at the birth of the consumers' republic. In the years after World War II, the United States debated whether and for how long price controls would be maintained before quickly deciding to abolish them. Cohen says that there was nothing inevitable about the outcome. But her discussion shows the exact opposite. It is hard to imagine why anyone would allow the supply and the demand for houses and cars to be regulated by blue-nose patricians such as Vassar College's Caroline Ware, who urged "keeping down with the Joneses" as if that were a good thing. Citing statistics seeming to prove that Americans liked the World War II–era wage and price controls and wanted to keep them, Cohen underestimates the everyday longing for unrestrained spending unleashed by the war's necessary restraints. "The defeat of price control was a slap in the face to the tens of thousands of women who mobilized for its extension." Yes, and it brought cheers from millions more who could now begin to buy what they wanted.

"Rent control was the sole survivor of the massive wartime price-control machinery," Cohen writes, failing to appreciate how devastating that comment is to her larger political argument. Rent control in places such as Manhattan served few, if any, progressive ends. The primary beneficiaries of rent control were not the poor who needed housing but the middle-class people who already had it. To find an apartment during the era of rent control, you needed to have connections, and to be

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willing to pay exorbitant "key" fees, and to know how black markets operate, and to have been lucky in your choice of parents. Imagine, then, if controls on other valued goods had somehow been allowed to remain in place during the years after World War II. Manufacturers of cars and houses would have let the quality of their products deteriorate (even more than they did) in order to capture profits not allowed by higher prices. Instead of paying more for the goods that they purchased, consumers would have paid exorbitant prices to have them repaired or serviced (assuming that those prices were not also controlled). Mostly, though, price controls in general would have frozen into place advantages that well-off people already had, harming the poor more than anyone else. The enthusiasts for price controls during World War II were the kind of people who lived in Greenwich and sent their children to Ivy League colleges. Cohen never stops to reflect that for all their talk of responsible consumption, they may well have been trying, like privileged people throughout history, to protect their position.

RACE IS ANOTHER SUBJECT THAT fits uneasily into Cohen's political agenda. She does fill an important gap in our understanding of recent race relations by reminding us how much of it—from the sit-ins at Woolworths to the urban riots of the 1960s and 1970s—was focused on goods. The dream of racial equality came to life by insisting on an equal right to buy things, just as it started its descent into marginalization by violently protesting the inability to do so. But none of this meant that African Americans could serve as a vanguard for a consumer movement that would inevitably serve the needs of middle-class buyers. The affluent society scorned by Galbraith was, for them, a dream to be realized.

This, after all, would seem to be the real meaning of the riots that shook so many American cities, including Newark, on which Cohen, true to her New Jersey roots, concentrates. One of Cohen's most effective visuals is two pictures of a Newark resident named Foy Miller taken in the same spot, one in 1967 and the other thirty years later. In the former, she is being asked for identification by a National Guardsman against a backdrop of scarred but nonetheless visible buildings. In the latter, she stands before empty lots, a downtown denuded of activity. Yet what point, precisely, is being made here? Cohen includes her discussion of what she calls the Newark "rebellion" in the same chapter that deals with the consumer activism of the 1960s, as if black attacks on Jewish shopkeepers were the African American equivalent of Nader's Raiders. But to see the 1960s riots as a protest against consumption downplays the extent to which, in their own self-destructive way, they were about obtaining goods by any means necessary.

In one of her ingenious asides, Cohen contrasts two Newark-born writers, Philip Roth and Amiri Baraka. Yet what the writers actually had to say undermines her more didactic treatment of these issues. Cohen tries to link the Newark riots to the larger picture of consumption by showing that urban devastation sent more whites to the suburbs and the malls, but *Goodbye, Columbus* was published in 1959, and by then the Patimkins had already moved out to Short Hills. And Baraka, whose angry screeds Cohen takes as progressive, illustrates how little the New Jersey riots had to do with politics of any kind. "Families worked together, carrying sofas and TVs collectively down the street. All the shit they saw on television that they had been hypnotized into wanting they finally had a chance to cop," Baraka observed. He seems more aware than Cohen of the desperation of many African Americans to join the consumers' republic, not to tear it down.

Cohen faces her greatest difficulties trying to reconcile her politics with her history when she discusses the tendency of marketing strategists to segment consumers into ever more refined categories. Back in the 1930s and 1940s, when Cohen's story begins, progressive consumer advocates would have had no problem denouncing such tactics. Those were the days of the Popular Front, and leftists, including those in or close to the Communist Party, outdid themselves in appealing to unity and solidarity. But in the intervening years many progressives have found themselves sympathetic to identity politics. No longer can one appeal to solidarity, either because (in the manner of Stanley Fish) there is no such thing or because solidarity is a distraction from a person's "real" interest as a woman, or a homosexual, or an African American. If she is to cast herself with her heroes from times past, Cohen should denounce market segmentation without hesitation. But if she is to identify with identity politics, she needs to tread more carefully. Is not affirmative action a way of segmenting a market—and in the case of a college education, a market for one of life's most valuable goods?

Realizing that she finds herself on "fragile ground," Cohen waffles. She cautions that "one must beware of promoting false or naïve notions of a universal 'common good' and unified 'public' and thereby denying the more diverse and complicated multi-cultural America that has greeted the twenty-first century," but then she goes on to add that "not all divisions among Americans are sacrosanct." The best that Cohen can do here is to call for a "concerted effort" to find a way to express our diversity while committing ourselves to common purpose. Compared to that, the Popular Front politics of the consumer activists of the 1930s, as naïve as they may have been, were at least consistent. Cohen wants us to "assume collective responsibility for each other," but if the cost of doing that is to insist that our multicultural proclivities have to give way to our common identity, that price, for her, is too high.

THERE IS AN OBVIOUS REASON why leftists hope to be able to organize people through their consumption: just about everyone is a consumer. Displaced farmers, angry workers, racially oppressed minorities: none of these groups has the sheer numbers represented by consumers. Desperate to find historical agents whose discontents would usher in a new era, consumer advocates from the New Deal to the 1960s chose, rather opportunistically, to organize people around their most ubiquitous contacts with capitalism. But in so doing they ran the risk of strengthening the capitalist order that they hoped to alter or to supplant. This is a dilemma that Cohen never squarely faces.

But face it she must, for the weakness of consumption as a means of pursuing progressive politics certainly complicates her story. Cohen tends to treat the history of postwar consumption in America as one long retreat from the idealists who urged us to shop more responsibly in the 1930s and the 1940s. In significant ways, however, those reformers triumphed, even if the venue of their victory became the conservative wing of the Republican Party. "Consumer benefit is the bottom line," said Christopher deMuth of the American Enterprise Institute when he was executive director of the Vice President's Task Force on Regulatory Relief in the Reagan administration. If all of us shop but only some of us vote, politicians seeking broad public support will appeal to the one thing we all have in common just as opportunistically as New Deal progressives.

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This is not a conclusion that Cohen wishes to reach. To avoid it, she argues that in the years since Jimmy Carter "the Consumers' Republic transmogrified into the Commercialization of the Republic." All of our recent presidents, but conservative Republicans in particular, by deregulating government and promoting greater inequality, gave up on the promise of abundance for all in favor of benefits that "increasingly became reserved for those who paid for them." Cohen then goes on to contrast the ideology of conservative America—"what's best for me is what's best for America"—with what she calls the message of the consumers' republic at its most idealistic: "the interests of individual purchasers as citizens and of the nation were one and the same." But her own book demonstrates with exceptional force that the idealism was only for show. In reality, the denizens of the consumers' republic were instructed to buy as much as they could to satisfy their individual needs. Consumption is like that. It is always about buying. Those who think that they can urge people to buy less or more responsibly delude themselves.

The real lesson of Cohen's book is that if you want to re-distribute income or to promote equality, you should try to redistribute income and promote equality. And if you try to make your agenda more popular by appealing to consumers, you will only make people more avid consumers. It was not just perversity that led Ralph Nader, a hero of Lizabeth Cohen's youth, to work so hard on behalf of the Republican Party. He must have realized on some level—and if he did not, then consumers certainly did—that if small cars are unsafe at any speed, one ought to buy SUVs instead. And for that ignoble end, conservative Republicans are the ones to have in office. ■

Adam Kirsch

The Trucer's Passion

THE COLLECTED POEMS AND SELECTED PROSE
By Stanley Burnshaw
(University of Texas Press, 488 pp., $50)

STANLEY BURNSHAW IS ONE OF those men of letters who are so variously productive, and for so long, that they can too easily be taken for granted as merely part of the climate. Burnshaw is ninety-six years old, and he has been a prominent literary figure for nearly seventy years. His first book, on the French poet André Spire, appeared in 1934. As an editor, first at his own Dryden Press and later at Henry Holt, he published books ranging from *The Negro Caravan* to *The Man Who Loved Children*. As a translator, in addition to his own fine translations from the French and other languages, he edited two pioneering—and in their method highly original—anthologies of foreign poetry in translation, *The Poem Itself* and *The Modern Hebrew Poem Itself*, which use detailed paraphrase to convey not just the sense but also the full meaning of poems in foreign languages. As a critic, he is perhaps best known for his work of poetic theory, *The Seamless Web*, and for his study *Robert Frost Himself*.

But above all Burnshaw has been a poet, publishing regularly from the 1930s through the 1970s. And since any poet considers himself—and deserves to be considered—a poet first of all, it is wonderful news that Burnshaw's work has now been made available for a new generation of readers. *The Collected Poems and Selected Prose* contains nearly two hundred pages of poetry, including several previously uncollected poems, as well as generous selections from Burnshaw's criticism and from his memoirs. It allows us to see Burnshaw as a genuine and very American heir of the Romantic tradition in poetry, who has pursued the highest themes over his long career.

The longest single work in the volume is Burnshaw's memoir of his father, *My Father, My Friend*, which appeared in 1981. Written mostly in his father's voice, it tells the story of the elder Burnshaw's emigration to America, toward the end of the nineteenth century, and his successful career as a social worker and an educator. The sheer length of the work, and the sometimes excessive detail it provides of Burnshaw's father's projects and achievements, might seem to unbalance the volume; yet it earns its place not simply as an act of filial piety, but as a study of the intellectual influences that determined the course of the poet's life and work.

Burnshaw's father was by temperament a missionary. A man of great intellectual gifts, a star student of Nicholas Murray Butler at Columbia, he gave up a career as an academic and a public school administrator to organize and to lead a Jewish orphanage. As a German Jew who was raised to believe in the "heroes of Progress and Reason—Voltaire, Diderot," this was a symbolically fraught statement of Jewish solidarity, a recognition that his Jewish identity took priority over his worldly citizenship. Burnshaw portrays his father's growing agony as the rise of Nazism destroyed his youthful dreams of progress and emancipation. "I had risen above divisiveness, yearning to take my place as a world-citizen," the father remembers. "Noble ambition, splendid, and also—*doomed!*"

Much of Burnshaw's work can be seen as an attempt to fulfill that doomed ambition. At the heart of his poetry and his prose is an equally missionary impulse, a desire to heal the world, and a search for the proper tools of healing: an ancient Jewish pursuit now celebrated in the slogan of *tikkun olam*. Unlike his father, however, Burnshaw has held sectarian solutions, and Jewish identity, at arm's length. In his last major poem, *Mirages: Travel Notes in the Promised Land* (1977), he records his experiences in the state of Israel, and while the pull of Jewish solidarity is very strong, so is his determination to reject all religious chauvinism. When he overhears a young girl talking about the biblical story of Sarah, who conceived Isaac after years of barrenness, Burnshaw wonders why this cannot be celebrated simply as a miracle of fertility, rather than as a manipulation of history by the Jewish God:

> I want to warn: don't tangle the little
> girl's brain
> With old men's tales of rites and
> covenants:
> Let her wonder at Sarah. Was bringing
> to birth
> In her old age not enough. . . ?

And he sees Judaism itself as just one of many religious lies that mankind tells itself in order to disguise the "numb caprice" that really governs human destiny:

> So you reject the forces
> By which all creatures live and the
> whole earth moves,

Adam Kirsch is the author of THE THOUSAND WELLS *(Ivan R. Dee).*

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Replace them with your private image
Of what-should-be and name your
creation "Yahweh."

This late poem re-affirms Burnshaw's lifelong choice against his father's path. Yet Burnshaw has also rejected what, to his father, seemed like the only alternative: a secular faith in enlightenment and reason. As *My Father, My Friend* shows, the Depression and the Holocaust ensured that Burnshaw would never be tempted by cheerful liberal notions of progress. His missionary impulse has always sought more absolute forms. He sees the evils of the human condition as radical and primal and has sought an equally radical and primal solution.

Predictably, coming of age in the 1930s, Burnshaw first turned to communism for that solution. He was an editor and a critic for *The New Masses*, and he has scrupulously included in this anthology some of the propaganda poems that he wrote at the time. These are every bit as strident and artistically nugatory as one might expect. But the same attitude can be found in Burnshaw's serious verse as well, such as the sinister "This War Is Love":

Reverence mercy by
thriving day,
Worship tenderness when
the soft bloom
Of night lowers, but know
that these
Are gods of doom
Leading you slowly, helpless away
To a faithless tomb.

In the dim hours of slow emergent
Hope heed the wild voice of the brave
Striving against their masters,
shouting
"No words can save—
Struggle is all of blood's
commandment:
This war is love."

Burnshaw was never satisfied with communism, and his search for social healing would soon take other forms. Ironically, however, it is as a Marxist ideologue that he may be remembered by many readers who have never read a line of his verse. The reason is that in 1936 he wrote a review in *The New Masses* of Wallace Stevens's *Ideas of Order*, which provoked Stevens to reply in the section of "Owl's Clover" originally titled "Mr. Burnshaw and the Statue." (Stevens later changed the title to "The Statue at the End of the World," and he excluded "Owl's Clover" altogether from his *Collected Poems*, but it can be found in *Opus Posthumous* and in the Library of America edition of Stevens.) The original review is usefully included in this volume, along with Burnshaw's later reflections on the episode.

Stanley Burnshaw by Jack Coughlin for The New Republic

At the most intensely politicized moment in American literary history, Burnshaw subjected Stevens to an orthodox leftist criticism:

> *Harmonium*, then, is mainly sense poetry . . . objectified sensuousness separated from its kernel of fire and allowed to settle, cool off, and harden in the poet's mind until it emerges a strange amazing crystal. . . . It is remembered for its curious humor, its brightness, its words and phrases that one rolls on the tongue. It is the kind of verse that people concerned with the murderous world collapse can hardly swallow today except in tiny doses.

In retrospect, Burnshaw sees that this was "criticism for the time-being-only," a spuriously political judgment that could not long satisfy anyone seriously interested in literature. Eventually, any reader, including Burnshaw, would have to admit that understanding literature requires "a concentration upon form, which, as Stalin later made clear, was simply a bourgeois' basic desire for decadence." And this is exactly the point that Stevens made, with typical obliquity, in "Mr. Burnshaw and the Statue." He points to the danger in Burnshaw's view that "Everything is dead/Except the future. Always everything/That is is dead except what ought to be," and questions whether even a Communist utopia could alter the sensual experience that is the basic concern of poetry.

Agree: the apple in the
orchard, round
And red, will not be redder,
rounder then
Than now. No: nor the
ploughman in his bed
Be free to sleep there
sounder. . . .

BURNSHAW WOULD soon admit that, indeed, the apple will be no redder after the revolution than before. Yet his movement away from political radicalism would lead him to another, perhaps even greater radicalism, conceived in terms of ecology and anthropology. The premise of Burnshaw's mature work, in verse and in prose, is that the apple was once redder than it is today, in a mythic, organic past; and that the task of poetry is to restore this edenic state, to make the apple redder once more. The paradise in this ecological myth is a condition of primal unity that Burnshaw eventually named "the seamless web."

Burnshaw's myth has its own troubling implications, and sometimes entails an explicit rejection of reason. True to his Hegelian heritage, his thinking is built around a dialectical motion in history. In the distant past, man enjoyed an immediate communion with nature, not aware that he was separate from animals and plants.

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But he was ineluctably forced out of this eden by the dawning of reason and language, which set humanity in opposition to the rest of creation. Man was destined "to break through the seamless web—no longer to be part of all that one senses and knows." Of course, one need not accept Burnshaw's particular myth to share the feeling, a common theme of Romantic poetry, that the modern experience of the world often feels mysteriously diminished. Blake, Wordsworth, and D. H. Lawrence, among many others, voiced the same complaint, which may be finally a secular version of the Fall of Man.

THE TASK OF POETRY, FOR BURNshaw, is to effect a synthesis: to use reason and language, the agents of self-consciousness and alienation, to restore the lost feeling of communion. "Poetic thought, no matter which aspects of reality it embodies, proceeds by enacting union. Viewed thus in terms of what it does, every successful poem is a binding-together." Exactly how the poem accomplishes such an eschatological binding is problematic for Burnshaw, as for many aestheticians before him. His proposal is reminiscent of the pseudoscientific theory of I. A. Richards that reading poems is a sort of calisthenics for the nervous system. Burnshaw resorts to the notion of "resonance and reverberation," claiming that poems produce "patterns of motion in the body" that match our primal rhythms. The poem is granted miraculous powers of healing and redemption:

> The understanding that poetry brings I call by the name of "creature-knowledge" in the hope of suggesting the entirety and profundity of the reader's involvement with the All. The poem's resonances-reverberations submerge the aspects of divisiveness that qualify his ordinary thoughts and feelings. Nor can future or past, of time or of place, exist in this here-and-now. . . . For the poem as a whole and in its units is, above all, an act of uniting. And to respond by experiencing its act of uniting is to relive, for the duration and with the whole of one's being, an indefinable sense of organic creature unity such as pervaded our creature-existence when it "knew" itself part of the seamless web of creation.

Logically, Burnshaw's theory of poetry should apply to all poems, regardless of their particular style and subject matter: *The Rape of the Lock* should be an act of uniting just as much as the ecstatic songs of Blake or Whitman. In practice, of course, it is less a theory than a desire that guides Burnshaw's writing of verse. His missionary impulse does not allow the poem's beneficent effect to be merely an effect, but makes it each poem's avowed goal and subject. Long before he set forth his ideas in 1970 in *The Seamless Web,* Burnshaw was writing poems that strive for creature-knowledge.

One appealing result of his belief in redemption by nature was to make Burnshaw, no less than Robinson Jeffers, one of the first ecological poets of America. In *My Father, My Friend,* he claims that even his Marxism was largely driven by what we would now call environmentalism: "a Communist is also a conservationist, since the earth will belong to the people—and the people won't let it be ruined just so someone can make a profit. They'll *treasure* the earth, as we should." Burnshaw's poem "End of the Flower-World," included in his collection *Early and Late Testament* (1952), is prescient of the environmentalist movement:

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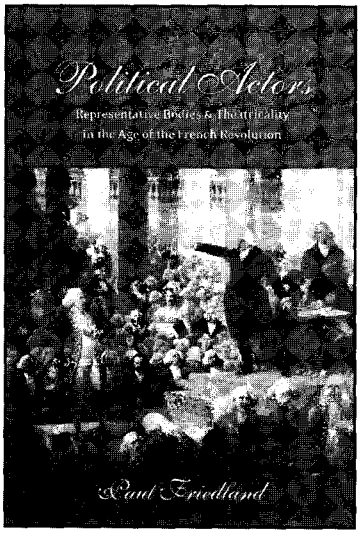
PAUL FRIEDLAND



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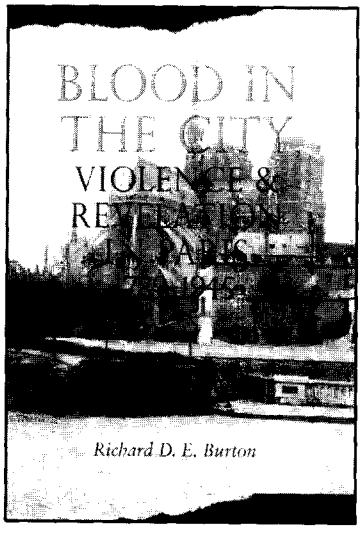

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Mourn no more the death of grass
and tree.

These will be as they have always
been:
Substance of springtime; and when
flower-world ends,
They will go back to earth, and wait,
and be still. . . .

Fear no more for trees, but mourn
instead
The children of these strange, sad
men: their hearts
Will hear no music but the song of
death.

But the moral passion that animates such a poem is also a peril to literature, as might be deduced from the credo that Burnshaw proclaimed in "Poetry: The Art":

A poem "is," some men believe. I say
A poem "is" when it has spread its root
Inside a listener's thought and grows a
tree there
Strong enough to burst a room in the
brain,
And bring its branch to blossom.
Then the host
Forgets the verse and ponders on the
mind
That made this seed of growth. . . .

When verse is simply the virus delivering an idea, there is no need, and no leisure, to create a perfect poem: this was the burden of Burnshaw's complaint about Wallace Stevens. As a result, Burnshaw has few poems that lodge themselves in the memory as complete and beautiful objects. He tends toward the abstract and the prolix, and he has a fondness for run-on sentences and compound words, as though unwilling to let a thought complete itself. One remembers, instead, his passion and his intellectual force, the thought itself rather than its artistic presentation.

ONE OF HIS MOST COMPLETE statements of the "seamless web" can be seen in "When Was It Lost?," which memorably asks Burnshaw's central question: "Can the mind contain/Earth in a symbol and still be one with earth?" The poem passes through each stage of Burnshaw's dialectic. After the waking of human consciousness, we are plunged into anxiety:

Throw down the dream:
You cannot sleep again. Doomed to
waking,
Your worlds within and without at
war, look harshly
Above and around. . . .
Enemy earth: enemy man:
Enemy tribe: enemy nation. . . .

Yet Burnshaw holds out the hope that we will overcome this doomed waking—not by falling asleep once again, but by coming fully to our senses:

There is no enemy. Listen without
And within. Hear them again
together: the self
Was at one before in safety, awake
and asleep
Before the coming of fear.

Like all utopias, though, Burnshaw's utopia is a stumbling block for the imagination. It is impossible to understand in concrete terms, precisely because it involves transcending human nature as we know it. Here Burnshaw resorts to paradox: redeemed humanity will be both "awake and asleep." And Burnshaw's best poems are those in which he acknowledges that any desirable redemption will indeed have to be a transcendence, not simply a reversion to animality or instinct. As he writes in "Time of Brightness":

Reason-mind is not wholly weak;
it can tell
High from low and the gross distinct;
it must tell:
There is nothing else to know with,
now that the reach
Of eye and ear is cut.

Wordsworth, too, felt that our sensual experience is diminished, that "there hath passed away a glory from the earth." But he believed that it passed away in the course of a single lifetime, that "Heaven lies about us in our infancy." Burnshaw believes that Heaven was on earth many eons ago—"When did we start to forget? A million years/Ago, two million . . . ?" In each case, the problem is how to give reason the sensuous immediacy that, according to the myth, eye and ear once enjoyed.

Wordsworth abjures this as an impossible wish, and he finds compensation instead in "years that bring the philosophic mind." Yet Burnshaw is reluctant to make such a renunciation; he continues to believe that perfect fulfillment is possible, if only mankind can undergo a spiritual evolution. The continuity with his earlier Communist worldview is unmistakable: he has exchanged an economic utopia achieved through revolution for an ecological utopia achieved through higher consciousness. The important question, which animates poem after poem, is whether this redemption can be achieved through reason or requires the immolation of reason.

BOTH ALTERNATIVES HAVE AN appeal for Burnshaw. He inherits from his father a strong intellectual conscience, which insists on facing the facts without taking refuge in consoling illusions. Like Hardy, he takes a certain grim pleasure in acknowledging the isolation and the futility of human existence. This realization is a crucial part of mankind's maturity, as in "Among Trees of Light":

In the night's darkness, we said, are
symbols stranger
Than ever day with all its magic and
dazzle
Could hide away.

Older now with empty hands,
emerged from darkness,
We move among trees of light. . . .

Fearful that eyes alone, or thought,
or love
Alone, can capture

Nothing. . . .

Burnshaw takes pride in the sense of honor that makes man want to know, even to know the worst. The expulsion from Eden, after all, was caused by eating from the tree of knowledge, and, as he writes in "The Axe of Eden," something in human nature "cries out/Against the blight of this Eden Perfected." Yet the desire to regain Eden, to knit together the seamless web, can also produce a seductive nostalgia for unreason. "Their Singing River (I)" recounts such a moment of longing:

Sometimes, dazed in a field, I think
I hear
Voices rocking the trees; then I stop,
race
To the boughs, listen—and hear not
even a thread
Of a wind. . . .
Now I cannot regain
Even by wilful dreaming the father
faces
Or the eye or hair of the ancient
women who bore me

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Or think to imagine how they might
pull me now
Into the redness of their singing river.

In this poem, Burnshaw still acknowledges that "wilful dreaming" cannot give him the ability to see the spirits of his ancestors, as primitive peoples claim to do. But in other poems he at least entertains the notion that a violent rejection of reason might allow him to be born again. In "Symbol Curse," Burnshaw rejects the symbolic, calculating, naming intellect:

Then die from me, symbol, die! that
I may fly back
To you, water-and-leaf, river-and-tree,
Cured of the killing thought. . . . I
have you whole,
O pure presence swelling my ears
and eyes!

The violence of this Blakean poem, the hortatory exclamation points, suggest that the poet is trying to convince himself as much as the reader.

In "Poetry: The Art," Burnshaw quotes Blake's epigram that "every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth." But we are left to ask whether everything can be believed, or whether some things, even the most desirable, must be banished from reason's sight. When Burnshaw is most effusive about the seamless web, when he treats it as a historically real condition that could be regained by an act of will, he inspires skepticism—his own as well as the reader's. Like the Marxist heaven, this heaven of cosmos and consciousness unified seems an illiberal dream, impatient of the limit that must characterize any actual human existence. What is most appealing in Burnshaw's work, rather, is the compassionate instinct that drives him to imagine such universal healing—what he calls, in one of his late poems, his "trucer's passion." In a long and productive life, he has earned a place among the poets and the heroes of wakefulness that he praises, in "The Terrified Radiance," as the keepers of our conscience and our passion:

Violent ones whose thoughts
Have been burning coals in my veins
and keeping
My heart from falling into the lost
disease
Of numbness to this eden,

That flows from the terrified radiance
of our minds. ■

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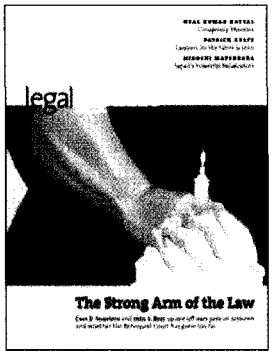

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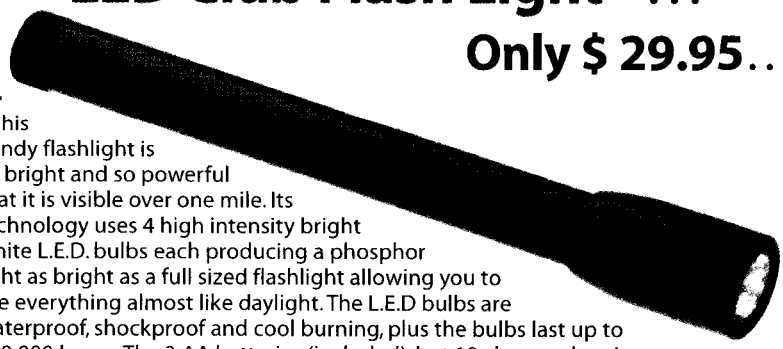

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FUKUOKA DIARIST

English Heritage

HIROSHI ISN'T HIS REAL name, but he's got a real problem. Each Friday after lunch, this Japanese student of mine sits at his desk with his English textbook, trying to make sense of the jumble of words. He doesn't even know the names of the letters, let alone understand how to put them together into combinations of sounds. The extraordinary thing is that Hiroshi isn't, say, a Japanese elementary school student. He is 19 years old, a university freshman with six years of English education behind him at the junior high and high school level—making this his *seventh year* of English study. And he still doesn't know his ABCs.

HIROSHI AND MANY OTHERS LIKE HIM are the shameful legacy of Japan's education ministry. Tokyo's all-powerful bureaucracy has laid out ambitious goals for its students and painful penalties for universities that fail to show progress. The design is laudable, but the results are a disaster. In an attempt to comply, administrators and professors alike make a concerted effort to pretend everything's great, doctoring their students' results and overlooking poor performance. The result is that, in one survey after another, Japan ranks last in Asia when it comes to being able to speak English. I have met high school English teachers who think "I am't" is a legitimate alternative to "I'm not," businessmen who still trip over the simple distinction between *he* and *she*, and hobbyist housewives who answer my question, "Do you like sushi?" with a succinct, "Yes, I am."

THIS MAY ALL BE RATHER SHOCKING TO Americans used to the stereotype of the Japanese "super-student." But much of that reputation—on high school English tests, anyway—was built upon a combination of relentlessly coached reading skills and the forced development of the students' short-term memories. Once the test was over, the information was discarded. And, since no one could satisfactorily devise a test to measure speaking ability, conversation was deemed an unnecessary frill. What mattered was mastering all of those foreign texts in order to help Japan Inc. get ahead. The result: Students can translate Shakespeare, but they can't say whether they like it.

AFTER TEN YEARS HERE, I THINK THE basic problem lies not in how the schools teach English but in how they evaluate their students. In short, Japanese schools, from the university level on down, grade students based on attendance: Go to school, and you pass. Stay home, and you fail. Many times, I've peeked into university classrooms and seen them crammed with students—students who sleep with their heads on their desks, talk with their friends, and send e-mail messages on their cell phones. Meanwhile, the professor hangs his head over his lectern, monotonously lecturing into the microphone.

UNLIKE THEIR U.S. COUNTERPARTS, Japanese universities are sharply limited by the national government in the number of students they can admit each year. But Japan's free-falling birthrate has left schools that once only accepted the best now scrambling to fill their empty admission slots in an effort to keep the revenue rolling in. Some schools have dropped the examination bar so far that the rejects of yesterday are today's valued students. Others have adopted a final catch-all tactic: A student who fails the university's entrance examination can still write an essay explaining why he'd like to attend.

AND, IF HE'S IN, HE'S AS GOOD AS graduated. Think of a U.S. university as a funnel, with its wide mouth accepting a large number of students at the beginning but demanding a high standard of performance along the way so that, in the end, a smaller number graduate. In Japan, the funnel has been reversed. The narrow end sharply restricts the number of students admitted—but, once in, there's virtually nothing to keep them from receiving a degree. If a teacher were to fail a student and keep that student from graduating, he would be clogging the pipeline, preventing the university from bringing in more freshmen at the other end. In addition, teachers say that, if they had the nerve to fail a student, particularly a senior awaiting a rare job in this recession-wracked economy, there is a good chance they would be sued by the parents for denying the student his due reward. Two teachers I know were told by their department chairman to pass their students—or else.

IT GETS WORSE. IN THE UNITED STATES, a grade of A usually means a student has achieved 90 percent of the requirements for the class. In Japan, an A can mean merely 80 percent. And, if students get a grade of D—there is no F—they can insist on a retest, a winner-take-all effort that will give them one more opportunity to pass the course. That last chance, though, is a joke. I have seen professors who, once they finished proctoring the retest, walk straight into the office and submit a C. The retest is thrown away, unread. Of course, there will always be a minority of self-motivated students who study and improve their skills. But the great majority never again work hard after passing the university entrance examinations they took when they were 18. A 22-year-old U.S. university graduate will hopefully demonstrate the intellectual maturity produced by four years of study, but his 22-year-old counterpart in Japan will often display the intellectual breadth of a high school graduate.

THE RESULT IS THAT THE EDUCATION ministry—which declared a century ago that its goal was to mold children for the benefit of society, not for the sake of the children's personal development—has created a passive, inarticulate class of followers, unable to think for themselves. As Alex Kerr, a noted critic of Japan's benignly oppressive government, wrote in *Lost Japan*, "Being average and boring here is the very essence of society, the factor which keeps the wheels of all those social systems turning so smoothly." Yet now, with the great ship of state upon dangerous reefs—heightened international competition, economic deflation—the aging leadership is looking to the next generation to step forward and meet the new challenges. And that next generation is asking, "Who, me?"

AS FOR HIROSHI: I STARTED WRITING this article just before his final oral exam. He had failed his summer midterm oral exam, which shocked him, and he dedicated himself to working harder. So he partnered with another student who patiently helped his pronunciation. He prepared for each week's lesson. And, when the time came for his final oral exam, I'm happy to say he not only passed but actually performed better than any of his classmates. Would that other students in Japan were encouraged to develop their talents more fully as well.

P. SEAN BRAMBLE

P. Sean Bramble writes and teaches in Fukuoka, Japan.

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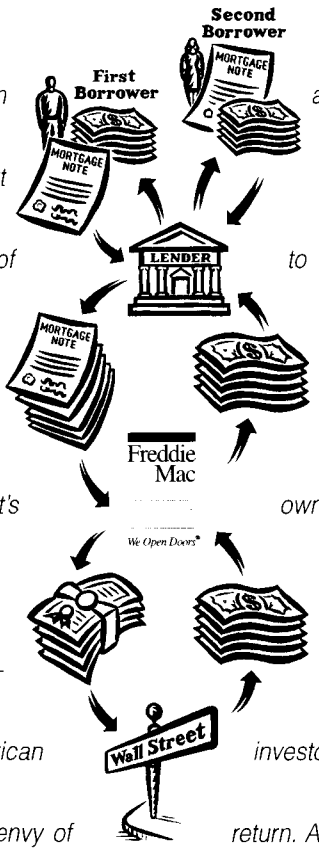
Freddie Mac on the secondary mortgage market.

The unsung hero of American public policy.



It may not be as well-known as Social Security, Head Start or the National Institutes of Health, but the secondary mortgage market is every bit as successful. Since 1970, it's helped 33 million hardworking families become homeowners and made the American home financing system the envy of the world. The secondary mortgage market is where lenders get the funds they use for home mortgages. They sell the mortgages to companies like Freddie Mac, and we, in turn, package them into securities and sell them to investors. The best part is, everybody wins. The borrower gets a home of his own with affordable monthly payments, the lender gets more customers and the investor gets a reliable, consistent return. All at no cost to the taxpayer. It's a system that works for everyone. You can't get more American than that. To learn more about our role, visit freddiemac.com/secmarket.

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Campaign Finance Reform: What Next?

Michael Bailey is a national fellow at the Hoover Institution and an assistant professor in the Department of Government at Georgetown University.

As he shepherded the McCain-Feingold legislation to passage, John McCain made it clear that he expected additional legislation to become necessary once politicians and interest groups learned to evade the new limits. Recent Federal Election Commission decisions and the activities of interest groups have proven him right, although he probably is not too happy about it.

One alternative for new reform would be to restrict contributions or spending. Even if this is constitutional (it usually is not), it is unwise. Studies show that the information available to voters and voter turnout increase with the amount of money spent on campaigns. In addition, taking money out of campaigns does little to affect the larger sums spent on lobbying, an activity removed from ordinary citizens. If anything, **well-funded campaigns provide *a counterbalance to special interest lobbying***, in that such campaigns are more likely to publicize and punish egregious service to interest groups.

Another approach is to finance campaigns publicly. This has been a nonstarter because voters dislike spending tax dollars on politicians, something that is not surprising in light of the current formula-based system's record for presidential candidates. That formula did little to wean Gore or Bush from wealthy donors even as it wasted 16 million taxpayer dollars on the Buchanan campaign (Buchanan spent an astounding $89 per vote compared to $3.66 for Bush and $2.35 for Gore). The formulaic approach may even have distorted the election: Buchanan ran for president because he had public funding, and Nader ran because he wanted public funding. Their presence on the ballot in Florida, as we know too well, may have changed the election outcome in Florida and the nation.

Done properly, however, public financing could reduce political reliance on special interests and the wealthy without provoking voter ire. First, citizens should be empowered to decide which candidates deserve money. As Bruce Ackerman from Yale Law School suggests, each voter could be assigned a fixed dollar credit that he or she could direct to any candidate (or cause). This would dampen concern about money being spent on disliked candidates and create a means whereby candidates could run credible campaigns without constantly currying favor with corporate, union, and wealthy interests.

Second, **reclaiming the tax dollars already *being spent on campaigns could provide a good* start toward a serious program of public financing.** Two hundred million dollars were spent on presidential candidates' campaigns in 2000, with almost $30 million on party conventions. In addition, Congress spends $1.6 billion every year on staff, with the modest estimate that congressional staffers spend 10 percent of their time on reelection activities. Reclaiming these public campaign expenditures could provide $450 million per two-year election cycle.

The bottom line is that a significant amount of federal money goes to campaign activities. The first order of future reform should be to ensure that such funds increase the voice of ordinary citizens, rather than protect incumbents.

— *Michael Bailey*

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.

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